



## Elder David A. Bednar “A Conversation on Leadership”

*February 24, 2010*

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Welcome to this enrichment session, which we've entitled “A Conversation on Leadership” with Elder David A. Bednar. Elder Bednar, it's a delight to have you here. We appreciate your willingness to come and instruct us and to engage with us in a bit of conversation on some important topics of leadership. I want to acknowledge also Sister Bednar, who's here with us. It's a delight to have you here with us as well.

Just a comment or two about the Leadership Enrichment Series. This series is basically a very newly created forum that our intent is will be conducted about quarterly, and it's an opportunity to bring together leaders of employees in the Church and the affiliates of the Church to come together and have an opportunity to ponder together and think together and to develop new skills and new insights into this incredible responsibility that we have as leaders of employees and missionaries and volunteers who are engaged in the purposes and the work of the Church. And so we're appreciative that you're here, and we think that this is going to be an ongoing forum that will be a great benefit to us.

I'd like to, if I can, share one quick scripture. This has been a scripture that I thought a lot about in the four years that I've been here in this assignment, and in some ways it has become sort of my guiding light on human resource and development issues. It comes from the 82nd section of the Doctrine and Covenants and is speaking about the law of consecration, and the Lord teaches us this: “And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church.”

Now, I've come to just love that metaphor of us building our talents and not just a little bit. He says build them one hundred fold, and then what do we do with them? We cast them into the storehouse of the Lord, and very unlike the world where we would use our talents for our gain and for our benefit, we cast them into the storehouse of the Lord, frankly to be used if, when, and how the Lord may choose. Our responsibility is simply to make sure that the storehouse is full. I think that that's really what sessions like this are all about, the opportunity for us to build new talents, to cast them into the storehouse that when the Lord needs something from us, there's more there tomorrow than there was yesterday.

Now what I'd like to do is introduce, if I might, something that we call the Leadership Pattern. In the spirit of that scripture, I had the opportunity over the last year to spend time in the Human Resource Committee with the First Presidency of the Church talking about leadership. And one of the points that they raised to me was they said, “Ralph, we want to invest in the development of our leaders and their talents, but we need to make sure that they see what we're shooting for. You know, what kind of leader is it that we want at the Church?”

And so I had opportunity to spend time with the First Presidency; with Elder Bednar, Elder Christofferson, Elder Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and Bishop Burton and just had a wonderful conversation with each of these brethren, asking the question What kind of leaders do we need in the Church going forward based on the work that you know that we have?

And the thing that was fascinating to me was how common the responses were, and from the information, input, that we got from these good Brethren, this was what we call a Leadership Pattern that we put together. And I just want to talk it through a little bit, to begin to describe what kind of leaders we're looking for.



At the very center, in every one of these conversations, they said we're looking for leaders who can lead as the Savior would. That sets us apart immediately from anything that we would see in the world. At the top of this pattern, we're looking for leaders who are able to act under the direction of the Spirit. Every one of these Brethren instructed us that we need leaders who are confident in seeking the same spirit of revelation that the Brethren seek, fully expecting to receive it, able to receive it, and then to apply that direction in the work that they do.

They were also very consistent in saying we need leaders who are able to align everything they do with the Brethren—a very consistent message.

And then as we went and we studied further the things that we heard from these Brethren, they seemed to identify six basic types of work that leaders need to do, and you can see them up here: to define direction, to organize work, to counsel together, to build capability, to accomplish work, get things done, and then to render an accounting of the things that we do.

And so this has become what we're calling the Leadership Pattern.

Now, as we again study the input that we got from these Brethren, the more we looked at it, we said there really are sort of two different dimensions of these six areas of this leadership pattern. And I know you can't read this, and not intended to necessarily, but one dimension of each of those six is what we call Leadership Principles. And these are gospel-based principles about how we define direction, organize work, counsel together—but they're comments that we received from the Brethren, and they're based on the doctrine and the principles of the gospel on how to do those things. And once again that sets us apart from the world.

But at the same time we recognize that in addition to those gospel principles, there are a certain set of practices that anybody to be successful in a large, complex, global organization such as this one needs to be good at: technology, finance, management, operations, etc. And we said what we really need is leaders who are good at both dimensions, that it's not enough to have someone who is deeply spiritual—although absolutely essential—but knows nothing about finance or technology or the operations of the work. Nor is it enough to have an expert in the operations or finance or technology and not be deeply grounded. Frankly, the leaders we are looking for are leaders who are really comfortable and good and experienced at both of these dimensions.

And so over time you're going to become more familiar with this Leadership Pattern. I just wanted to take an opportunity in this session to introduce it to you. It's going to become sort of the basis of development work that we do for leaders going forward.

With that, what I'd like to do is just talk a little bit about the format for this afternoon's conversation. As Elder Bednar and I talked about this, he said, "Ralph, I don't want this to just be an ordinary talk," which he would be marvelous at. But as we talked we said, "Why don't we just highlight the handful of questions that are some of the hard questions that all of us as leaders struggle with and think about. Let me pose those questions to Elder Bednar and have him respond to those.

And so I've spent some time just thinking about them in my four years. What are some of the interesting and sometimes really hard, challenging questions that we struggle with? And so the format of this will be that I'm going to pose those questions one at a time to Elder Bednar, and we'll have opportunity for him to talk about his thoughts to those.

At the conclusion of probably five or so questions we'll open it up for questions from you or comments from you. We've got microphones. So we do encourage you to think about questions you may want to ask on any of these topics that Elder Bednar will cover today.



After the Q&A, I'll invite Elder Bednar to just make any concluding remarks that he may want to make, and after those remarks Brother David Nielsen will offer the closing prayer.

So with that, Elder Bednar, I think we'll go ahead and get started. The first question that we thought about—kind of a general one but I think a very important one—and the question is Why is it so important that leaders develop others? In our conversation I remember you saying that was one of yours too, if I remember right, one of the most important things that leaders do to develop others. Why is that so important, and in your experience, how's that best done?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Great. Well first of all, I appreciate this opportunity to be here.

I think leadership includes both what you do and what you leave. What you do is necessary but not sufficient; it's not enough. The most important thing is what you leave when you're not there, and the most important thing you can leave are people who have increased in capacity and confidence.

That originates, in my experience, when I was called the first time to be a stake president; the call was extended by Elder H. Burke Peterson. It was in the mid 1980s and I will never forget the first thing he said after he extended the call. He looked at me and he said, "Now, your greatest responsibility is to begin right now, training a multitude of men who can replace you."

Now, I had just been called. I mean I'm in shell shocked at being the stake president and he's telling me to think down the road about the need to be a large number of men whom the Lord could call on to be the next president of this stake. And that influenced, I think, almost everything I thought and did during eight years of serving as a stake president.

So you would think and seek inspiration in relation to how will this help these people to develop. Frankly, his teachings to me helped me focus less on managing programs in the organization and be a lot more focused on people and ministering and helping people to learn and to grow.

This had its manifestation again at BYU-Idaho. Let me describe something that will sound bizarre but is just way cool. At BYU-Idaho you do not have student body officers who serve for an academic year. At BYU-Idaho there's a track system of admission. And what that means is some students attend school in the summer and in the fall; their semester out of school is in the winter. In Rexburg, Idaho, if you can't figure out that's the best time to be there then you got a problem. Some students go in the traditional cycle of the fall and the spring, and some students attend in the spring and the summer.

In each of the semesters there's a new slate of student body officers. And the first time we ever talked with them we simply said, "What you do in the semester that you're here is nice, but that's not the issue. What can you do during your term of service that will prepare the way for the next people who follow you to be successful? And the measure of that will be if the incoming student body officers who follow you have to begin at the same place where you began, then you failed. How will you help them know what you know? How will you help them learn what you have learned so that they can begin where you leave off instead of going back to ground zero?"

To me that's all about developing people. So it's in part what you do as a leader, that's necessary. But the greater contribution, the greater value added is in helping people gain capacity and confidence, because they're going to be there long after you are.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** You know, Elder Bednar, in my experience, if I can just kind of pursue that just



for a minute—in my experience it is so easy to get so caught up in the day-to-day things that are pressing us and that we need to do that it's hard to remember that. I mean, what you said seems simple but not always easy. Any thoughts of what a leader can do to make sure that we carve out time to actually do that though?

ELDER BEDNAR: Well, it's a false premise to think that you don't have time. All of us are less effective at delegating, for example, than we should be because we don't want to take the risk that someone will do it wrong, and it will take me so much time to train someone else I can just do it better myself. That's only true one or two times. The second, the third, the fourth, the fifth time that you are doing it yourself, the aggregate time is now greater and probably is not what it would've taken to teach and help someone else gain the necessary skills so that you don't have to be the only one to do it.

So I guess there's some self-interest in that. There's a little bit of selfishness in that the more people you have with increasing capacity, you can be off into other things that you probably ought to be doing but that you can't do because you're the only one who can do all these other tasks.

BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN: That's really helpful. So I ought not think about it as an extra chore, but frankly, rather, as we do that, that may be the only way that we can expand what we can accomplish and produce.

ELDER BEDNAR: That is the chore.

BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN: That is the chore.

ELDER BEDNAR: And you're diverted from your primary chore because of all these other things that need to be done.

Just a silly illustration. Sister Bednar and I have three sons. I like to have a yard that looks nice, and so I was fairly meticulous about how you mow the lawn. And I was famous in our neighborhood for the neatness of the trimming around the lawn. I mean, people would come in our neighborhood, "How do you do that?" They would come and ask for lessons on how to do this.

So one day I began teaching one of our sons how to do this, and he just totally messed it up. Now, I know none of you have done this, but my first instinct was to take the weed-eater away from him because I didn't want him to mess it up. And there came one of these kind of amazing moments where you go, "So let me make sure I understand this. Not messing up the trimming around the lawn is more important than helping your son learn this lesson?"

So he just totally obliterated the edges of the lawn. And you know what, it grows back and it's not a big deal. And he did it the second time and he was as bad, if not worse, than the first time. And each time it was horrible, but it got a little better, and the long-run outcome was I didn't trim the lawn anymore and he did it as well as I did.

You have to take some inevitable hits on the front end. And you're invested in that and it's kind of painful. And what was really cool is that when he learned how to do it, his brother wanted to learn how to do it, which I never could've pulled off.

BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN: Can we coin now the lawn-trimming theory of management? (Laughs)

ELDER BEDNAR: Whatever works. As long as they don't breathe each other's air, it works.



**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Thank you. Second question. In that same conversation where you said this was one of your first priorities, this one was really the second thing that Elder Bednar had raised. I heard you talk about the need to act and not be acted upon. What's that mean to you, and how do we apply this in this really unique organization? And one of the things I've observed here is that we understand the principle of acting and not being acted upon and we understand the principle of obedience, and we seem to interpret that as though that means follow somebody else. And for some of us, it seems a bit of dilemma. I mean, which do we do? Do we be obedient to what we're told to do or do we act and not be acted upon? And sometimes it's hard to sort that out.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** OK. This will almost sound like a general conference talk, but in the division of all of God's creations there are things to act and things to be acted upon. By virtue of the fact that we are sons and daughters of God and we have been blessed with moral agency; with that agency we are to act primarily and not merely be acted upon.

This book of scripture is an object; it does not move unless I or something else moves it. It has no capacity or power of independent action, which is what agency is. You and I can move ourselves. I just don't know an undergirding principle more important than acting and not just sitting and waiting to be acted upon.

In 2000, President Hinckley announced that BYU--Idaho or Ricks College would become BYU- Idaho. Now brothers and sisters, I didn't have much more advance notice of that than you did. And when he called to tell me that that was going to take place, I said, "President, what would you have me do?" And he said, "Make it happen." And that was it. There were a series of guidelines from the board that we followed, but we had basic parameters and the admonition to act.

Well, that day we had a series of press conferences. First we met with the faculty and all of the campus employees, and I'm sure I said some things that were very disheartening to them. I said, "I have absolutely no idea how we're going to do this." And you could just see the looks on the faces of these people. "Oh, this is a great president we've got." (Laughter) And I said, "But I can tell you one thing: if you sit in your office, if you work in your area waiting for the president's council to tell you how this is going to work, then it won't work." And we talked about being agents and having the capacity to act and not merely be acted upon.

And I simply then extended this invitation to the entire campus community: "Now as we go forward, as we try to figure out these principles, as we take a look at what's going to have to be done, how what occurs in this area will influence what happens here and here and here, you have as much responsibility in your area of work as I have in mine. And in fact, if some things are going to have to be adjusted in the physical plant, then most of that will be identified and recommended by people in the physical plant or in academics or in the non academic support areas.

You do not have permission to just sit there and wait for somebody to tell you how this is going to roll out. You have as much right to receive inspiration in relation to what happens in the physical plant as we do for the entire institution. And we'll put in place the process and the pattern for being able to surface and counsel together about those issues, and ultimately the president's council and the board of trustees will say yes or no. But this is going to take everybody in that pattern acting and not just sitting and waiting to be acting upon."

It is my belief that the truthfulness of that principle made possible a transition of Ricks College from a two-year institution with 124 academic programs to a baccalaureate degree-granting institution in four years with 51 accredited degrees. That occurred because of that principle and because those people, I think, believed that they had a responsibility to act and not just be acted upon.

Well, and can I tell just one more quick story? Now, the stake over which I presided was huge. It was like 260 miles north and south, about 240 miles east and west, 17 units, 9 of them were little bitty branches. The median income in



this stake was \$8,500. Got that? Eighty-five percent of the households in the stake had no Melchizedek Priesthood in the home, and they were primarily first-generation members of the Church. Nobody in the stake was unemployed; 100 percent of the members of the stake were underemployed.

This member of the Seventy calls and says, “I’m coming through this area. I’d like to have the members gather on a Wednesday night so that there’s some things that we’d like to teach them.” And again, I tried to do this with great deference and respect, but I said, “It’s not a good idea to invite these people on a Wednesday night. Some of them will have to drive four and five hours, they can’t afford the gas money, they’ll have to take off work on a Wednesday afternoon to be there, and if we invite them they’ll come. And they’ll get home late or they’ll drive so late into the night it will be dangerous or they’ll have to get a motel room, which they can’t afford.” I said, Whatever you want—we’ll bring the stake presidency, the high council, whatever, but it’s not a good idea to invite all of the members from all over the stake.”

And he was not pleased with me when I told him that. And I don’t want to sound anything other than appropriate, but that was the right thing to say. And I wasn’t fearful of putting that on the table for him, that information, because we’re to act and not just be acted upon. And even though he wasn’t happy with it, when he got done listening he said, “I can see that that’s the right thing to do, so we’ll adjust the schedule.” Well, I think that’s the example. Yeah, you want to be strictly obedient and if he had said, “Look, I’m telling you we’re going to do it,” OK, we’ll do it. But I felt an obligation to put that out on the table so it would influence his judgment.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Great. And I can’t help but think about how many people are coming to us as leaders asking for something maybe a little out of the box, as you said, and what’s our response to them? What message are we giving them? Are we encouraging them to strike this balance well or are we encouraging them to never do that again?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Yeah, I think all of this is also related to the Lord’s type of leadership. You know, in the secular world, leadership is all about achieving strategic goals and being aggressive and assertive and having charisma and all that stuff you read in all the management books. But that’s not the Lord’s pattern. And we ought to benefit from secular stuff about leadership, but we also ought to discount a fair amount of it because that’s not how it works here.

Just think about any responsibility you’ve ever had as a leader in the Church. Were you well prepared before you were called? No. Did you know what you were doing when you were called? No. So the Lord, by inspiration through those who are in authority, calls us to do things that we’ve never done, that we’re not prepared to do, and that we struggle with on the front end especially, learning what we’re to do.

Well, my phrasing for that is what happens as soon as you begin to have any idea of what you’re doing and gain any measure of confidence, you’re released and you’re clueless again in some new responsibility.

And there’s a reason for that. As long as we’re clueless we’re dependent upon heaven. As soon as we think we know what we’re doing then we tend to rely more on the arm of the flesh. In the Church every single one of us has been in the position where heaven took a chance on us. We didn’t know what to do, we certainly were not experienced, we were worthy and willing, but heaven took a chance.

Truthfully, when we then are the one in the chair to receive inspiration for someone else, aren’t we less willing to take a chance on other people? We want folks who have the requisite skill and capacity, and we want everything to run smooth and so we use the same 10 people who at some point in time were given an opportunity, developed the skill



and the capacity and the confidence, and we want to look good so we just keep moving them around in the different auxiliaries.

The great enjoyment comes when someone who's really clueless gains confidence in capacity. That's fun.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Let me add a two-minute story if I can, and I'll do this in a public forum ready to take counsel from a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that I may have absolutely been out of line here. But it reminds me, this question, of oh, I'd been here six months or so, and I remember being in a meeting with the Bishopric. And on a particular issue, it doesn't matter what it was, but I had a different view than did the Bishopric, and I expressed it and we had what I thought was enjoyable conversation going back and forth.

And after the meeting a good brother who was there, not a member of the Bishopric, took me aside and said, "Good Brother Ralph, if you want to stay here longer than the six months than you've been, you just can't do that with the Brethren." And I said, "Is that right?" And I said, "Well, why is that?" And he said, "Because when you do that it shows a sense of disloyalty to the Brethren." And I paused for a minute and I said, "That's interesting, because from my view I show my highest loyalty by giving them my best advice and helping as best I can." And he and I viewed that differently.

But I thought about it and I went in with my next meeting with the First Presidency and I said, "Brethren, coach me, counsel me as a newbie here," and I told them that story. And I said to President Hinckley and the First Presidency, I said, "I make three assumptions. The first is that at every time we're together, you expect that you want me to give my best personal advice and professional advice. (00:36:31) Second assumption is that sometimes we will agree and sometimes we won't. Third assumption is that that's OK." And I said, "Then the assumption I hope that you would make about Ralph Christensen is that any point in the conversation when you want to say, 'Good Brother Ralph, thank for your input but you're off base; we want to do this, I'm on board.'" And it was fun. President Hinckley looked me in the eye and he said, "Well, Ralph, isn't that how we all do it?" And I paused for a minute and I thought, "Not really. Not really." (Laughter) So now I'll take your counsel. (Laughs)

**ELDER BEDNAR:** I have no counsel. I just want to read a scripture. This is one we all know. But I think there are elements in this that obtain new eyes to see and new ears to hear because I think this lays out principles related to acting and not being acted upon. "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence." So there is to learn the duty, learn the parameters, learn the guidelines. Act in the office "in all diligence," which speaks not only of effort but also of competence.

The next verse: "He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand." I just think there are vital elements. This is a part of the Lord's pattern for leading and learning and acting and not being acted upon.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Thank you. Next question. The next one has to do with performance. And again, this is one that I think we as leaders often struggle with. I mean, what kind of performance can we expect and particularly at the Church? I mean, can you expect top performance? Can you expect the best performance that there possibly could be? And if so, how do we manage in the Church setting for that top performance and particularly as we try to balance great performance with principles of justice, accountability, love, mercy, compassion, all of that? How do we manage performance, Elder Bednar?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** The answer to the question is yes. Of course we would expect that kind of performance. This is the Lord's Church. We are not running an organization; this is the kingdom of God on the earth, and we are prepar-



ing for the Second Coming of the Savior.

If we really understand that, the patterns and the processes that we put in place now are imperative in relation to the Second Coming. So I don't think we're just putting in time, punching the clock, and getting a paycheck. This is the most important work that can be done anywhere, any time on the planet.

Now in terms of how do you manage for that? I wouldn't be prescriptive, but there would have to be very clear understandings—expectations and understandings—about what is the overarching mission. Let me give an example. In Jacob there's a verse that says, "For because of faith and great anxiety, it truly had been made manifest unto us concerning our people, what things should happen unto them."

Now I'm going to tell another silly story that illustrates that verse. One of our sons was an assistant in the priests quorum and he said, "Dad, we're having an activity with the Laurels in two weeks. Do you have any ideas about what we can do?" And I said, "Mike, get your scriptures and read Jacob chapter one, verse five," which is the verse I just quoted.

We were riding in the car, going someplace, and had our scriptures and so he whips this out and reads it. "For because of faith and great anxiety, it truly had been made manifest unto us concerning our people, what things should happen unto them." I said, "Mike, does that help ya?" He said, "Dad, I love reading scriptures with you. Now would you pay attention and answer my question? (Laughter) My question is, we're having a priests and Laurels activity. I'm in charge of helping to pull this off. Have you got any ideas?" I said, "Mike, read the verse again." So he read the verse again. I said, "Did it help you this time?" Now he got a little bolder. He said, "Earth to Dad. Dad, watch my lips. Can you help me with the priests and Laurels activity?" I said, "Mike, read it again."

So he read it again. I said, "Mike, in this verse it says, 'For because of faith and great anxiety.' Anxiety in this verse doesn't mean stress. It means anxious regarding concern. Now, have you thought about this before asking me?" "Uh, no." "OK, what are the things that should happen to the priests and the Laurels as a result of this activity?" "Well, I don't really know." "Then I can't help you. Why don't you be prayerful and consider what things should happen unto the priests and the Laurels as a result of this activity. And then come back after you've thought about that and we'll talk."

Well, a day or two later he came back. "Dad, it would be so cool if the priests and the Laurels could understand this about the work of proclaiming the gospel." I said, "You're right. Now, if you wanted priests and Laurels to learn and understand that, what would you have them do?" And he started coming up with these great ideas of stuff to do. I said, "Mike, you got your answer. And you got your own answer."

I don't think most of us are very good at helping people understand the outcome, the things that should happen in the department, in the organization, and more specifically unto the people. Now again, I'll slop over between secular and spiritual worlds. In the Church we have auxiliaries to the priesthood. Auxiliaries are some of the greatest resources, the most underutilized resources in the Church to accomplish the work that really matters, because they have no idea the priesthood work that the Brethren want done and they don't get it from us as clearly as they should.

And so they—because they are so conscientious and anxiously engaged—they will try to figure out and do lots of things, but if they were just lined up with the work that needs to be done, under the direction of the keys of the priesthood, get out of the way.

I set apart a brand-new stake president, and when I did I told him, "You will be called President by all the people in





the stake and that's appropriate. But I never want you to hear the word 'President.' Every single time someone calls you 'President' I want you to think of Alma. You read Mosiah 23 through Alma 40 and you become Alma. You're not running an organization here. You are Alma. And as you begin to organize this new stake, I don't want you to just fill up the boxes; don't just call a new stake Relief Society president, don't just call a new Young Women's president. You get real clear about the priesthood work. You need help from the Relief Society and the Young Women and others, and you be real clear about what that is and you can't be clear if you haven't figured it out for yourself. In fact, don't you call any stake auxiliaries until you, President Alma, are clear about the priesthood work you need help with." I said, "And by the way, you only have one task, Alma. Shepherd people to the temple. That's it. You're Alma. Shepherd people to the temple, that's it."

When they finally got to the point where they called a stake Relief Society president, he said, "Dear Sister Relief Society President, we only have one work and that is to shepherd people to the temple. Everything that you do has that as the overarching objective. Sister Young Women's President, we only have one thing that we do here; we just shepherd people to the temple."

In the area where this stake was organized there were already four stakes; this was the fifth. It's been a couple of years, and there are more worthy members of the Church and more temple worshipping from that one stake than the other four combined because the auxiliaries to the priesthood really understand what Alma wants help with, and they all just get in and they go.

So you can really let people act in the office to which they have been called. And I don't think that's just a Church thing; I think that's an organizational thing as well. If they understand where we are going—and that takes a lot of time, and that takes leaders who are clear about the ultimate objective and the target and the mission, and you spend a lot of time helping people to see and understand that. Where there is no vision the people perish. Where there is no vision, stuff don't get done very well.

But in an organization like this, with people of faith and testimony and good will, if they can see where we want to go, then you equip them with correct principles and the confidence that within those principles and parameters you have a responsibility to act and not be acted upon, get out of the way. I don't know if that responded to the question but—

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** That's great. As you were talking, a scripture came to mind. I'm reminded of Enos, who said that he had been taught by his father in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. In general, my sense is that we are pretty good at nurturing. I'd be interested in any of your thoughts on the appropriate ways to give admonition, and that's the hard part of this question on performance.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** OK. Two things come to my mind. Number one, a principle that is hard to hear but resonates as true: when we fail to give needed correction or counsel, it's because we're thinking of ourselves. We normally think, "Well, you know, I don't want to hurt this person's feelings." No, that's really not true; you just want to be liked. And the reason I'm not going to tell you what really needs to be said is because I don't want to be viewed negatively or fall into disfavor.

It is far more loving to appropriately provide correction and counsel than it is to duck the issue. I had a second one, I should've jotted it down. Oh, the other one is that to me, the admonition—well, I guess the best example of that is our Council of the Twelve, with the First Presidency. Nobody cares about getting credit; nobody cares about being right and getting credit for being right. People just care about getting it right the way the Lord wants it. And therefore, you can really say what needs to be said, and you don't always do it in the best way or the



smoothest way, but nobody's looking for reasons to be offended or to take umbrage. You're just, OK, fine, let's get to this.

Elder Dallin Oaks is one of the finest minds on the planet. Can you imagine what it's like when he's going someplace in the world to give a lecture to a law society about Mormonism 101 and he says, "David, I really need your help. Could you read this for me?" And you go in and say, "Now, Elder Oaks, I wonder if with those not of our faith, I wonder if this language would make sense." Now, you typically would think "Well, you know, I kind of knew what I was saying there; I had that for a reason." Elder Oaks's response is to go, "Do you know what? That language with those not of our faith is clearly better than what I had thought. Thank you." And then there may be another one where he says, "David, I can see where you're coming from, but I don't think that makes that point as forcefully as I need to the way I've said it here." And you just don't worry about anything except getting it right. So I think that's a part of the admonition.

The second part is individual and spiritual, and that is if you haven't been rebuked by the Holy Ghost in your personal prayers lately, I'd recommend you improve the meaningfulness of your personal prayers. To be rebuked is to be corrected and counseled.

Now, have you ever done something at work that you knew you shouldn't do? Have you ever with your spouse pushed a button on your spouse that you knew would cause them to go off? You understand what I'm saying? Don't you know your spouse so well and your spouse can push your buttons and you can push hers? Am I making any sense or are you just— (laughter) are you going, "Oh, he can't be talking about this, this candidly"? And have you ever pushed one of those buttons with a colleague at work or with a spouse or a child or somebody else and you did it intentionally, and then after the fact you try to come up with all kinds of silly reasons why it was justified to do that, and you're really lying to yourself?

When you pray, doesn't the Holy Ghost say to you: "You are really a piece of work. Who do you think you're kidding when you did that intentionally? You did it with an intent that was not good, and then you try to construct this whole rationalization for why it made sense." The Holy Ghost will help you see things as they really are, and you can't hide from it.

So if we are praying with an open heart, with real intent, and with faith in Christ, the Holy Ghost will help us see ourselves as we really are, and there are lots of instances where that is not pleasant. And that applies at work as much as it does in our families, as much as it does in our responsibilities in the Church. So those are the two things that come to my mind in terms of nurture and admonition.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Very helpful, thank you. Your comments about the workings of the Quorum of the Twelve actually lead very nicely to the next question. Many of the Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have spoken about how they bring different backgrounds, different points of view, and really divergent views on a variety of topics, and yet they always speak about the sense of unity and love that exists. I've heard many employees of the Church talk about how difficult it is to really engage in a conversation where there's difference of opinion and disagreement. In fact, I've heard many say you really have to stop short of that because contention is of the devil and we don't want to let that into our conversation. And yet with the Brethren, as I listen to them, they talk about not contention, but they talk about a tension of views that they find very helpful. Would you comment on that, please?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Yeah, without getting too academic about this, any communication operates at two levels. There's content—stuff that you're trying to convey, orally or in writing—and then there's also a relationship component in what's going on. And I think what you're expressing is the fact that if you're going to disagree it's about the content, the substance of what's being addressed. And you can do that without negatively impacting the nature of the relation-



ship that grows out of how you're communicating with each other.

So in the meetings of the First Presidency and the Twelve, they are very forceful. And these are people with very different backgrounds, very extensive experiences professionally, in the Church and otherwise, and so no one is reluctant. You are there to give voice to issues so that it can ultimately reflect the Lord's will. And out of that counseling and "Yeah, but it should most effectively work this way. I agree with that but not in every circumstance. What about a situation like this?" As you do that in a spirit not of getting defensive or I want my proposal to succeed, it's just about getting it right without getting credit.

For example, do any of you have any idea—don't answer this, but do you have any idea who had the primary role in writing the proclamation? I mean, that didn't come out of a committee of 15. That process requires that at least some people would take a lead in getting some things on paper so everyone can read and react and contribute, right? I don't think anybody in here can identify any individual's fingerprints on the proclamation, and you never will. That's because nobody cares about getting credit. It's just about getting it right. So that's the nature of it. It is to the point. It is concise. It is pointed but not in a contentious or relationship way; it's all done for the glory and honor of heaven and the building of the kingdom on earth. That's what those interactions are like. And you're there with the First Presidency, you've seen that in the HR Committee.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Sure. That's helpful. Very helpful. Final question and then we'll open it up to questions that you may have in the audience. In what we call the Leadership Pattern that I showed, we talk about sort of two dimensions of things—one very spiritual-based dimension and then the other is really kind of a practices and skills based. I'd just be interested in any comments you have about the balance between what we bring from a spiritual point of view balanced with what we bring from whatever our profession is, and in terms of leaders how we ought to balance those.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** You may be surprised at the conciseness of my answer. I'll quote Elder Richard L. Evans, who was speaking to a group of young people. And he said, "It's good to be faithful, but it's better to be faithful and competent." (Laughter)

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** That's a great answer.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** You can't use spirituality as an excuse to slack off on necessary competencies. In fact, because of what we know spiritually, then there should be a greater yearning for developing whatever competencies are necessary so that I can act in the office to which I have been appointed and learn my duty.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** I love it; that's very clear. Because as we put that together from the direction from you and others, that is so much how we felt, the need to have both. And I think for us as leaders to be working on our spiritual depth and to be working on our professional depth, we need both.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Yeah, I guess I want to add one additional element to this. I'm not sure it's right on this question but it's just a perspective. I've spent my entire professional life not in the Church organization. It was only when we were invited to go to Rexburg that I became an employee of the Church. And when I was ordained a Seventy in 1997, Susan and I sat outside of Elder Eyring's office and I just said, "What would it be like to work in a place like this? What would it be like to know that all these people believe what you believe; they're temple recommend holders." I couldn't imagine what that would be like. Because where I was in my responsibilities, when I would teach a class in the late springtime, my eyeballs could never look above the chalkboard. You know what I mean? If I have a class of



60 students, I mean I'd just have to look at this level because you could not let your eyes go down. So to walk into that office building was just quite an experience.

And then when we went to Rexburg, one of the very first things we did was have a temple session with all of the faculty. I'll never forget driving to the Idaho Falls Temple with Susan. I said, "Can we really do this? Is it OK to have 500 faculty members and we're all going to be in the temple together?"

This is so liberating to be in the employ of an organization where you have the ultimate in freedom. To take what we know about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, true principles, and apply them in what seems like secular kind of work, but it's the kingdom of God. That is the most liberating thing I know of because you have access to all truth and you don't have to hold back. You can use the language of the scriptures.

Anything that I may have ever known or pursued in my career as a management professor and consultant came from the gospel, from the scriptures, and from experiences as a priesthood leader.

When you take that one verse, "Let every man and woman learn his or her duty and act in the office," and if you're faithful, if you're slothful—I mean, it just doesn't get any clearer or more profound than that. And we have access to all of that.

So this whole notion of spiritual and competence, if I understand this, this is the dispensation of the fulness of times, which has as its focus gathering together all things in one in Christ. So those are not separate; those are all things gathered together in one, in Christ, and you've got to be both faithful and competent.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Thank you. Ready for some questions?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Sure. Except I have to make a comment. See, the culture here is that everyone will just sit there because no, we really can't ask questions. Yeah, you really can, and it would be great if we don't waste time while you get over that. (Laughter)

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** That was clear. Thank you. So my understanding is that we've got four microphones here and then a couple up there as well. Please, in fact, why don't you stand up if you've got a question and we'll get the microphones to you. Who would like to take the first question?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** I told you (laughter).

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** You are right. Here we go.

**MALE:** What have you learned about motivating people beyond their perceived capabilities, what they feel they can accomplish and what they feel that they can deliver? I'm curious in your best motivational techniques.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** OK. I'll only do a little background so that I might have a small amount of credibility on this. In my former life as a professor of business management, I wrote books about motivation and stuff like that. It's all bogus. There's no such thing as motivation. Motivation— (laughter) the word motivation stems from a Latin root *mo-vere*, and what that means is to make move. Well, nothing outside of you makes you move for any sustained period of time. The only thing that will cause you to move is what's inside. So think of President Benson. The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. What the



world's talking about from the outside in is incentives and punishments and rewards and all that stuff. That's the typical motivation stuff. But the only motivation that matters comes from within and is a function of seeing what we really are. The difference between what we really are and what we ought to be spiritually or at work or anything else, and recognizing that in the strength of the Lord, through His grace and the enabling power of His Atonement, what looks so overwhelming that I'll never get there, I don't have to do alone, and that He will help me close the gap. And that applies at work as much as it applies at home and at church.

That's why the spirituality and the capability issue—if we really are coming unto Christ, then our capacity is being enlarged through His Atonement to do things that on our own we could never do. So that to me, that's the mighty change of heart. That's the change from within that comes through the Atonement and the workings of the Spirit. That's how I would describe that inner stuff rather than motivation techniques or tricks.

To the person—who had the question? I didn't see where you were. Does that miss your question or does that respond to it? OK. Anything that you want to follow up with given what was just said? Thank you for your question.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Thank you. Who's next?

**MALE:** I'm somewhat hesitant to ask this question given our discussion about acting and being acted upon. But I'm going to take the risk anyway (laughs). OK, we've talked about and been presented an outstanding leadership pattern. What should be our role as managers in addressing this concept with our people, number one, and number two, will there be changes to the normal review process that we've just completed for next year?

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Let me start with the second one in terms of will there be changes to the normal review process. Frankly, in our view, the review process—we don't envision big changes to that with the exception of I would encourage us as leaders to use this pattern in that.

In fact, I'll tell you what I've just done in mine, OK? I've taken this and with those that report to me, I've got two things I look at. I take a look at did you do what you said you were going to do last year? And we've talked about it several times during the course of the year, but we have a conversation about what they said they were going to do. And then the second thing is I've actually taken each of these elements, the six and then the other three, so nine, and I'm having a conversation with people that report to me and we're talking about these nine elements. And frankly, I'm doing that just to kind of experiment and so far I like it.

And so I suspect that we will, in a more formal way, move that into the process. The process will look a lot like it is because the process actually isn't about papers and forms; the process is do we get clearer on our roles and responsibilities and then do we talk with one another in an ongoing way during the year, do we talk about how we're doing? The thing at the end of the year—frankly, I think we make too big a deal of that. It's important, but hopefully we've been having conversations through the course of the year.

I think the only thing that I would envision changing is having practices with this this year. Personally, I really like it. I think that we will probably try to formalize that a bit to encourage you to talk with your employees both about what they did and your sense with them about where they are against these nine elements of this pattern.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Let me suggest a principle that may be useful in thinking about going forward, how do we use this, and what do we do. The role of a teacher is not to talk. The role of a teacher is to invite learners to act so that they can learn for themselves. And they need to act in accordance with correct principles.



So if I were in your shoes, I think I would be asking the question: What kind of experiences would best help people learn this leadership pattern? And I would really seek inspiration in relation to that.

Now let me disclose just a bias or a prejudice, I guess. I think we talk too much because we believe talking and telling is teaching, and it's not. To teach you first have to observe and listen so that you can discern and then know what to say.

So in a rollout of something like this we typically say, "OK, here are the nine points" and so on and so forth. I'd think about other kinds of ways. Of course there's explication of where did this come from and what are the basic elements. But I'd have far less of that and far more of—for example, take this pattern and come back to a department meeting or some other setting prepared to talk about the one or two key things that you learned going through this leadership pattern. And not only what did you learn, but based on what you learned, what is an implication for you for how you do your work? The very process of people prayerfully seeking inspiration to learn and to improve—they will be taught things by the Holy Ghost that no lecture is every going to dispense. So I guess a guideline would be help facilitate the learning of the people who will be influenced by this; don't just give them a lecture about it.

Help me know if that's responsive to your question. Did that help?

**MALE:** Excellent, thank you.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Thank you.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** You know, if I might, just to reinforce, I think most of you got something that looks like this as you came in. Flip it over on the other side, and to echo what Elder Bednar just said, we'd encourage you all to just kind of ponder three questions. One, specific to this session: What were the main things I learned from Elder Bednar? And two, this might be something you do alone and/or with your group of employees together as a group of managers. But then the next two questions: What is the Spirit teaching me that I need to do in order to become a better leader?

We will probably learn, frankly, as good as this session might have been, that's where we'll learn, if we go to the Lord and ask that the Spirit teach us what I need to do to be a better leader. The third question: What did the Spirit teach me that I need to go back and teach my team? In the way that Elder Bednar just discussed. And so we invite you to kind of think about these three questions.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Could I add one additional thing? This is kind of a related principle, and that is the very pattern of counseling together. As we take, for example, the Leadership Pattern, we accept an invitation to take it, to prayerfully ponder, to seek inspiration, to respond to a question or two, and then as we counsel together I think so many times we think that revelation comes through one individual and that's the way it is.

Well, a bishop is not going to be the only person who receives revelation pertaining to the ward. Now, listen carefully so this is not misunderstood. He's the only one who can affirm the right direction in the authority of the keys, but the whole point of a council in the ward is to capitalize from the experience of the sister who's the Young Women president and the sister who's the Relief Society president and the brother who's the Sunday School president, each of whom may contribute an element of the overarching inspiration, which then has to be aggregated and affirmed by the one who holds the keys. But so often in the Church we say, "Well, we got to wait for the bishop to receive the revelation to tell us what to do." No. Everyone in the council has the responsibility to act and not just sit and wait to be acted upon and contribute to that revelatory process.



That same thing applies here. And that keeps people from going to extremes either in a spiritual or in a secular way. There's a safeguard in that council process and pattern that's very, very important.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Thank you. Next question.

**MALE:** When viewed by the outside world we seem very different. We think differently, we dress differently, we speak differently. So much of that difference is about us trying to do the Lord's work and build the Lord's kingdom, and not bring in the world, so we want to continue "being different" to move the work forward. Yet the Lord's put a lot of truth and a lot of good things into the world. So as a leader, when you think about using all the good things the world has to offer, how can one pick out the best of the world and use that towards building a more collaborative culture-- see the goodness in the world and help that goodness build the kingdom?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Well, the thought that comes to my mind is prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. I think we need to be looking broadly, reading broadly. Some of us have regular opportunities to travel broadly. And from that you see things that can be brought to bear in building the Lord's kingdom.

If I could suggest one other lesson, just in my own life, there's a great lesson from the Motorola Corporation. If you go back and look at their history, in the early 1900s they were faced with some very important decisions about the nature of the business that they were going to do, and radio was relatively new. And they were trying to decide if they should get into the business of making home radios. Now, RCA already made home radios and dominated that market. And Motorola, at that time, made a very interesting decision. They said, "Why would we follow into the market after RCA and try to beat them at something they've already established as a very strong market presence?" So Motorola took a look around and they said, "OK, if RCA's going that way, then we're going to look this way."

Cars were brand new and they said, "Hmm, nobody's putting radios in cars." So Motorola decided to build cars for radios instead of for homes, and that was the first real huge success for Motorola. Now, if you take a look across their corporate history, every time they've had a key strategic decision to make, they looked at where the market was going and then they'd turn around and do the opposite.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** I think what we ought to do is be looking and learning broadly and then also benefiting from the fact that if the world is doing this, then one of the places we ought to make sure we look is this way.

For example, the Church doesn't need to mimic YouTube. We don't need a Mormon YouTube. We need to learn from what YouTube can do and then we need to use that kind of technology and that kind of approach in the Lord's way, not the world's way.

So I don't know if this rambling is responding to your question. But I don't think we ought to be afraid. All truth is a part of the gospel. There are some things where those who preside will say, "No, that's not gonna fit here and we don't want that." That doesn't mean we wouldn't bring it in, talk about it, and get to the point where we could make that kind of decision and recommendation.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** I think we have time for another couple questions. There's one right up here.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** A sister.

**FEMALE:** Can you give us a working definition of humility and how to apply it to our lives as leaders?



**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Let me repeat the question; it's a good question. Give us a good working definition of humility and how to apply that in our lives as leaders, Elder Bednar.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Couple of things just to think about. Not too long ago I was visiting with President Packer, and he made just a very interesting observation. He said, "David, serving in this responsibility, the longer you serve, the less able you feel." If you think about a person who would serve as a stake president, for example, nine years, the first three years you're pretty much totally clueless, so you're safe because you're dependent on heaven.

The second three years you might begin to see repeating kinds of challenges and cases and you're still clueless, but you're not totally clueless so you feel reasonably comfortable. The danger comes in the last three years that you might ever begin to think "I know what I'm doing." I would suggest "Yeah, I know what I'm doing" is an absence of humility. Because even though this is the 93rd time you've seen a case like this, you have no idea what you're gonna do. As long as that's your approach. New person, new circumstance, and yes you benefited from the previous 93, but this is a soul where they deserve your very best, and you can't just apply everything from the past to this particular one.

So the great danger comes after we have gained experience that we might begin to think we really know what we're doing.

Number two, I think that the characteristic of the natural man and the natural woman is to take credit for things that go well and to assign blame to others when things do not go well. "The woman thou gavest me," this was not my idea, I didn't want to do it, she made me do it.

Now, as we begin to experience the mighty change of heart, not through goal setting and not through personal discipline, but the natural consequences that begin to reverse. And when things go well, the first thing we do is drop to our knees to give credit to God, and when things do not go well, the first question we ask is, "Lord, is it I?" Now, that doesn't answer your question about an operational definition, but those begin to be, I think, some of the indicators that the mighty change of heart is having an impact, and I'm looking there to express gratitude and I'm looking here to try to improve.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Thank you. Question over here?

**MALE:** I've been pondering on act and be acted upon. And I've learned from my own experience that fear is debilitating or paralyzing. How do you change or help change a culture, for example, the example you used with your trimming of your lawn. How do you allow your son or someone in your employ to make a few mistakes and still expect a high outcome? How do you balance? Sometimes the fear that people feel is what causes them to stop acting or to be acted upon. How do we break through that?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** You've still got the mike, right? Can I ask you a question?

**MALE:** Sure.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** I'll tell you how it works for me and then see if it has any connection to what happens to you.

I just have had a lot of opportunities to be thrust into positions that I had no idea what I was doing. And I just remember that when somebody else is in a position where they're going to make mistakes because they have no idea





what they're doing. It really to me is just fascinating that you and I have been benefited through those experiences and it is so hard for us to provide those same experiences for somebody else. That to me unlocks the door. Now, you're not going to be willing to do that on a project that has a huge budget and an immediate timeline. It's called line upon line, precept upon precept.

So that's the whole point of my response to this one brother about think about learning experiences that people could have: well, not all at once. The Lord's pattern for learning is incremental, line upon line, precept upon precept.

Nephi had to go to Jerusalem three times to get the brass plates. Now, it didn't work out the first time. Well, he made a big mistake, he wasted time. Well, second time, didn't work. Was he out of tune, was he not receiving impressions from the Spirit? My belief is he couldn't have gone the third time and made it and done it if he hadn't learned the lessons the first two times. The third time he goes not knowing beforehand the things that I should do. The first two times I think he probably figured he knew what he was doing. And when he finally went not knowing beforehand and he had the faith to go, then heaven opened doors and things began to happen.

If we remember that we were once on the way to Jerusalem and had no idea what to do, then I think that helps us receive inspiration about how to help other people get on the way to Jerusalem and help them have the learning experiences just like Nephi did that ultimately made it possible for him to obtain the plates of brass. Does that miss or hit your question?

**MALE:** I think it's right. I think sometimes the fear—and it's fear or however you want to look at it—a leader always wants to look good, and that's part of the natural man we've been talking about, and sometimes we close the door to their progress because we're afraid of what's going to happen.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** But see, this is the irony. What looks good to the people who oversee, wherever we are, is not what you do, it's what you leave behind in the people. And we do less of that because we're so busy impressing them with things that won't impress them. Thank you.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Elder Bednar, I really see a great connection between this question and the last one on humility. The premise in your response is to have the humility to recognize as a leader that I don't have the answers, I don't know where I'm going necessarily, and sometimes we feel a need to have this front as though we do. And those two questions connected really—

**ELDER BEDNAR:** As long as your answer to every question is not "I don't have a clue." (Laughter)

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Now I've got my problem (laughs). I think we have time for one more question. Please, right down here and let's bring a microphone if we can.

**FEMALE:** In leadership we often hear the phrase "holding people accountable." That feels negative to me a little bit, and I wonder how we can include an environment or create an environment that helps them be accountable or want to take accountability rather than us feeling like we have to hold them accountable?

**ELDER BEDNAR:** I'm going to give another homey illustration here. When I was at BYU–Idaho I taught a religion class every semester. It was a Teachings of the Living Prophets class, and the basic approach was this: If you do everything in the syllabus and you do it extremely well, with a high level of confidence, the highest level you can hope for is a C because you have met the requirements and that's C work. If you want to get a B or an A, then you have to



identify what you're going to do above and beyond the minimum requirements of the syllabus to get an A or a B.

Now, you don't determine that alone; you have to counsel with me about it if you're a student, and we will come to an agreement that will get you a B and what it is that will get you an A and then you have to execute that. And at the end of the semester you will come and give an accounting of whether you did or did not do the things that you said you would do.

So the final exam was a student coming to present a portfolio. Not to just grease me, because I was, I think, reasonably discerning—now wait a minute. If I were to bring five illustrations of what these students did to get an A, I don't think you'd believe it. You never could have imposed upon them an assignment that they would've done at the level at which they performed. It was unbelievable. I'll just give you one.

One student took every single talk in general conference ever given by President Gordon B. Hinckley and identified the major themes and then prepared materials that would be used in a future family related to the themes as taught by President Hinckley.

A second one—now, do you have any idea how many—this is above and beyond regular assignments in the class to read all those, to find them, to categorize them, to identify themes—unbelievable.

Another student said, "I'm going to take a look at the first messages, the transcript of first messages by all of the members of the Twelve and the First Presidency from such and such a time to identify both the reactions of these men when they were called and the themes across generations. Now you ought to read these. This was common when they did it themselves and they held themselves accountable.

So you get real clear about what the expectations are, what is it we're trying to get to, how is it you think you best add to where we're going, let's make sure we're in agreement with this, and you will come and render a judgment on how well you did. The Book of Mormon teaches the judgment is a self judgment. We're not going to have to have the Savior tell us where we go; we're gonna know. Well, there's a principle in that that applies to what happens in an organization but we're not very good at getting clear. All the stuff on the front end is hard. You got to get that pretty clear about what the expectations are and the parameters and then let them be anxiously engaged in a good cause and bring to pass much righteousness for the powers in them or they're agents unto themselves. Did that make any sense?

**FEMALE:** Very much.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Great question, thank you.

**BROTHER RALPH CHRISTENSEN:** Thank you so much for your questions. Elder Bednar, as we conclude I would just express for all of us both our appreciation and our love for you as a leader, as a servant, as a colleague, and just having come to share this with you. Thank you so much. And any concluding comments you might make, and then I'll ask Brother David Nielsen to close in prayer.

**ELDER BEDNAR:** Great. Well, I hope it's OK to have fun because I sure have had fun. (Laughter) It is called the plan of happiness, and our faces and our personages ought to be evidence that we believe that.

I just have two observations. Number one, there really has been a sweet spirit here, and that's because of you and so I express my appreciation. I think I know a little bit that it's not customary for a member of the Quorum of the Twelve to say, "Well, what do you want to ask?" And so for some of you to take the leap of faith to do that, I just want to com-



mend you and thank you, and you have invited a very sweet, powerful, and strong spirit.

Number two, I really love you. I just can't tell you what a joy it is in my life to get to work in that building with you. Because I've spent most of my life not in that building and certainly not working with people like you. So I thank you and I love you.

As we conclude, I declare my apostolic witness of the living reality and the divinity of the Father and of the Son. I witness that They live. I witness that this is the Savior's Church; He stands at the head; He speaks; He directs its affairs. I don't just know that and I don't just testify. I witness that it's true.

I invoke the blessing that as you ponder, as you pray about the impressions that have come to you today from the Holy Ghost, that your mind will be illuminated, you will receive inspiration, and you'll have joy in your heart and you'll know what to do. In the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.