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The Power of Love

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I am indeed grateful for the opportunity to stand before you. It is an honor and privilege to do so. English is not my native tongue, so I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will guide me. I am also, as yet, a “greenie” as a general authority, so I am still frightened to serve the Lord in this capacity. I won’t try to preach to you; however, I would like to share some spiritual experiences of the last few months that have blessed my life. I have more specifically selected spiritual experiences that touched our Japanese society so I can show you how our Japanese members are affected by the gospel.

“President Kimball Kissed Me and Hugged Me”

About five months ago I had the privilege of traveling with President and Sister Kimball to attend area conferences in the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan for the dedication of the Tokyo Temple and area conferences in Tokyo and Osaka. This covered almost a three-week period. I had the privilege of becoming well acquainted with President and Sister Kimball. On that trip President Kimball touched many lives through his love, among them an unknown boy. I believe your knowing of this experience will help you in your work.
Because we were staying at hotels during the area conferences, local members were asked to watch over us. Every morning, usually between 6:45 and 7:00, President Kimball would come out of his room. He would come out in the hallways and express his love to the security people and to the local brothers who were helping to watch over us during the night. He would kiss and hug and embrace them. At 86 years of age he is tireless in his service and in expressing himself to other people. He is unbelievable. He hugged and kissed them. He loves them unconditionally. He has “charity . . . the pure love of Christ.” (Moroni 8: 47)

At the Keio Plaza Hotel in Tokyo, President Kimball came out of his room at about 6:45 a.m. with bare feet and without a tie. He hugged a young man. This young man had completely lost his direction in life. His family situation was unstable, and he was insecure. Although he had been baptized when he was 17 years of age, he was uncertain about what he wanted from life. Just a week prior to the area conference he walked into church and, expressing himself to his bishop, said, “I want to be a good member. What can I do?” His bishop told him to come to Priesthood Meeting and Sunday School, read the scriptures and continue to pray, and keep the commandments of our Heavenly Father. Then he told him that that week they needed to supply one young brother to assist with the night security for President Kimball and his party. So on that particular morning he was there when President Kimball came out. This young man, 20 years of age, couldn’t stop his tears. Later he said, “In the Celestial world, is it like that? When President Kimball kissed me and hugged me, I felt so strongly that the Spirit testified to me that our Heavenly Father is just like he is.” And he said, “Oh, I was almost going to miss the glorious opportunity to stay in the Church! And I wouldn’t have stopped wandering. I almost missed the total picture, the panorama, the beauty of the gospel.” This young man is now saving his money to go on a mission. He felt strongly that the Spirit testified to him that he could help his parents and could share the gospel with them. The people must feel the true love of Christ, unconditional love. This love can heal any concerns of our lives. “Wherefore,
my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love.” (Moroni 7: 48)

“I Was Inspired”

I want to share another beautiful story. Right before I left Tokyo, a young boy walked into my room. He handed me a letter which said:

My family consists of three members now, and we are living in our grandparents' home because my parents were divorced two years ago. Since that time, my grandfather and mother started working. Sometime in October of 1979, I met the young missionaries at Shibuya Station. I studied and was baptized within three weeks. Although I received baptism, I became totally inactive for about seven months. Since my family was not stable, I wasn't happy. I had been wondering about my life and the future, even about my life hereafter. I wandered around every day and didn't go to school because I had lost sight of my objectives. With a feeling of depression and emptiness, I walked to church one day without consciously thinking of going there. I met with the missionaries again and with the members. I attended a beautiful baptismal service which impressed me greatly; in fact, I was inspired. I decided to attend church after that. I learned the importance of the gospel teachings and the importance of missionary work. I was called as a branch missionary and assisted the full-time missionaries almost every day. I went to street meetings with them and contacted many, many people. The Lord helped me. Within two months I brought many people to the full-time missionaries. I, myself, taught seven people and had the privilege to baptize them.

As you can see, the people must feel the Spirit of the Lord. Once a person feels the power of the Holy Ghost, he or she can overcome any obstacles. It is the greatest prescription to resolve any human concerns, mental or spiritual.

The letter continues:

One day as I was praying, I received a strong feeling that I should teach the gospel to my own family. I prayed and prayed and then introduced the missionaries to my mother first. I felt that it was very important to convert my family in order for us to obtain eternal life as a family. My mother was attending another Christian church and had many friends. Because she was afraid of losing these friends, at first she refused to be baptized. However, with the help of the missionaries and through the cooperation of the members, within about a month she was
baptized. Many members came to her baptismal service. It was a beautiful baptismal service. It is a testimony to me that I could baptize her with the help of the Lord. Everyone at the service cried and cried because of the Spirit we felt in that room. When we went through the Tokyo Temple open house and saw the sealing room, my mother started to cry because she felt the Spirit so strongly. I explained to her, “Mom, this is the place we have to come back to be sealed for time and all eternity.” We decided at that moment, in that sacred spot, that we would come back.

My sister was baptized September 11, 1980. I performed her baptism also. I am sure that there are more wonderful Latter-day Saints who can bring their families into the Church. This I know.

Although my mother and sister joined the Church, I forgot to tell my grandparents about the gospel. I regretted this so much. This January my grandfather had a heart attack while he was on a business trip. I was very shocked. I thought that I might not be able to baptize him by my own hands. I earnestly prayed to my Heavenly Father at ten minute intervals for a period of three or four days. I prayed so hard. I had never prayed so hard in my whole life. The doctor had given up and then the miracle happened. Eventually my grandfather’s health was restored. Heavenly Father blessed him. After two months he was out of the hospital. The first part of March I called our good missionaries and asked them to come to our home, where I introduced them to my grandparents. They were so receptive. They received the discussions and believed in the gospel. Elder Kikuchi, this week after stake conference I will baptize them. I thank God from the bottom of my heart because he has blessed me so much. I am 17 years old. When I am 19 I plan to go on a mission. I will live righteously. [And he went on to say,] With the help of the Lord, can I bring my father back to my home?

As you can see, Japan is no longer the place of family stability. Every three seconds, somewhere in Japan, a divorce is happening. A lot of children are suffering because of that. As far as I understand, this is second to the United States and Russia. The divorce crime is unbelievable. How can we save and protect our families and prevent this? I say that only the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ can heal and protect families and prevent this great crisis. This young boy’s story can teach us that the gospel of the Lord, the Spirit, the power, the light, the life and love is the only solution to the world’s problems.
"That Food was Life Eternal"

I want to share another story with you. In Japan, in the spring and the fall we have what we call Undokai, which is a sports festival for kindergartens, elementary schools, and junior high schools. Many mothers prepare a lunch and the families spend the day at school watching the children participate in sports events. On just such a day a Japanese sister, Sister Asada, had prepared a lunch, and she and her family went to the kindergarten sports festival. As lunchtime approached Sister Asada began to spread her food before the family. Sitting next to her was a mother, grandmother and three children. The mother had forgotten to bring a lunch, and after a few minutes she said she must go home to get their lunch. Twenty minutes passed and this woman had not returned, so Sister Asada offered to share with the grandmother and the children the lunch she had prepared. They refused, saying they would have their lunch soon.

Well, they waited almost an hour and still the mother didn’t return. Sister Asada found out later that this mother had forgotten to prepare a lunch, and it took her about an hour for preparation. Meanwhile, Sister Asada again offered to share her lunch because she could tell that the children were hungry. This time they graciously accepted. From this experience, the mother and Sister Asada developed a warm friendship.

One day Sister Asada invited this woman to a Church fireside. At the fireside a missionary sat down next to the woman, and she asked, "What is this Gaijin doing here?" (Gaijin is what we call foreigners.) "They are missionaries of our church," Sister Asada said. "They serve two years without receiving any money from the Church." The woman asked if she could study with them. This was a shock to Sister Asada, who quickly replied, "Of course, please do."

This woman began to take the discussions from the missionaries. The most difficult part for her was when she was taught the discussion on the Word of Wisdom: at that time she was smoking about 5 packs of cigarettes a day and was drinking alcohol pretty heavily. When her husband found out that she was taking lessons
from the Mormon missionaries he said, "You won't be able to give up your alcohol and cigarettes. I know some LDS people in our company and they are really strict about living the teachings. If you can join their church, I'll join with you."

At this time the family had been having many problems. The woman was baptized, and as she bore her testimony she said, "Brothers and sisters, my family has been unhappy and our life meaningless. But because of Sister Asada's kind food offered to my family at the kindergarten sports festival, she was a life saver for my entire family." And she expressed with tears in her eyes, "Do you know something, brothers and sisters? That food at Undokai was life eternal to our family." Now her three children have been blessed and her husband is taking the discussions from the missionaries.

I am trying to show through these three stories how people are brought together by the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only solution and preventive medicine for our problems. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail" (Moroni 7: 46)

"I Felt Your Love"

I would like to share another experience with you. Three weeks ago one of our mission presidents called me. "Elder Kikuchi," he said, "help me. There is a young missionary in my office who says that he wants to go home. How can I help him? I have spent three hours with him, but he says he wants his ticket and passport and wants to leave." "I suppose you went over everything with him?" I asked. "President, could I just speak to him?"

He put the missionary on the phone and I said, "Elder, I understand you want to go home." "Yes, Elder Kikuchi, just give me my ticket. I don't want to stay here." "Well, I understand, but I want to know the reason why you want to leave." "Oh, I explained everything to my president." "Well, Elder, I don't want to force you to stay here, but I would like to visit with you before you leave us." "Oh, you don't need to come here. I just spent a
lot of time with the president.” “Elder, we need you here. This is where the Lord sent you to do His work. I need you. I love you. The Lord is extending His hands to you to be the savior for the Japanese people. Are you refusing the Lord’s invitation? Are you going to leave us alone? Could you kindly spend even ten minutes with me? I’ll come up this afternoon. I’ll catch the first plane. I don’t want to force you to stay, but at least let me talk to you before I say it is okay for you to go.” “Oh, you are a busy man. You don’t need to come up here and you don’t need to spend the time with me.” “Elder, I tell you, you are more important than my paperwork. You are important enough for me to come up to spend the time with you.” And he said, “Okay.”

But before I hung up I said, “Elder, tell me why you want to go home.” And I could sense the tears. “Elder Kikuchi, my parents got a divorce. I’ve lost my track.” “Did you talk to your president about it?” “No.” I said, “Well, would you tell him about it, and I will come up. Just wait 24 hours and then you can leave tomorrow.” Then I just hung up. Within 30 minutes he called back. “Elder Kikuchi, you don’t need to come up. I felt your love. I will stay.” Truly our service to others must consist of the same love that Moroni described as personifying the Lord Jesus Christ: “And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou has prepared in the mansions of thy Father.” (Ether 12: 34)

“Someone Loves Me”

Another experience: A mission president from another mission at the south end of Japan called me. One of his missionaries wanted to go home. This missionary had been born and grew up in the western part of the United States. For some reason, when he was sixteen he left his home and went to another area. A couple of years later he met the missionaries and was baptized. A year after his baptism—when he turned nineteen—he became a missionary. He was a stake missionary first, and he worked and saved his money so that he could serve a full-time mission. Now
while on his full-time mission he wanted to go home. I told the
mission president I would come and talk to the young elder.

I spent two hours with this young man. He just talked and
talked and talked. I just listened while he stated all the reasons he
wanted to go home. After two hours I said, "Elder those are not
your real reasons for wanting to go home. Is there something else
that is wrong?" And he started to cry. He explained about his
family situation and the problems his parents had. He received no
mail at all from home. He said, "My companions get letters
almost every week. I started to get lonesome, you know? I need
to feel that someone loves me." I gave him a hug and told him
that I love him. The Lord loves him. Heavenly Father loves him.
Of course he stayed. The Lord said, "Behold, my bowels are filled
with compassion towards you." (3 Nephi 17: 5) We ought to
have this compassion.

**Listening is a Dimension of Love**

I believe we can learn something from these stories. I have also
learned a great deal from these experiences.

I believe we ought to listen more with our hearts than with our
ears, with deep love and concern for others. We in the Church
should listen—in Priesthood, in Primary, in Sunday School, in
Sacrament Meeting and any other meeting. Leaders in the Church,
such as bishoprics, stake presidencies, youth leaders, elders quorum
presidencies, counselors, parents—even in your professions—I
firmly believe that as Elder Richard L. Evans put it, "listening is a
dimension of love." I also believe that the art of listening is an
eternal quest. I believe that listening has a healing power and is
the most curable medicine. I feel so strongly that we need to have
good listening ears in the Church. I also believe that listening is
the best preventive medicine. Listening to a child, a husband, wife,
missionaries, students, patients—I believe listening is the most
precious expression of your love and concern. I believe we need to
listen more carefully to our people. We need to do better.

I believe it was John Raskin who once stated, "Give a little to
your children and you get a great deal back." I believe this
principle can be applied in our ministry. I am concerned about one thing in the Church: we don't listen enough. We need to listen more carefully to our people and we especially need to listen to the whispering of the Holy Spirit, the still small voice. We need to do better.

The Power of Prayer

President Hugh B. Brown shared a story of something which once happened to a ship's captain down in the South Atlantic. He had run out of fresh water and his crew was athirst. Another ship came into sight and he signalled, "Send us water. Send us water." And the signal came back, "Let down your bucket. Let down your bucket. There is fresh water all around you. All around you. You are in the Gulf Stream." They let down their buckets and found that this was true. They had not realized that the course of the Gulf Stream as it was driven out had maintained its pure water—its virtue, so to speak. President Brown said they were able to save themselves by that which was all around them, yet they did not know it. He said:

"Brethren and sisters, there is available to you wherever you are, blessings and opportunities, the privilege of teaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ if you let down your buckets, which is your own prayer, into the gulf stream of the Holy Spirit, which is everywhere."

To help find the solution to those who have problems, in any situation we ought to rely upon the true source of power—the power of prayer.

The World Needs You

Thank you for your great service. The world needs you. I am proud of you—the way you use the basic principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in helping others. I wish we could have ten, twenty, or fifty thousand LDS psychotherapists like you, or counselors or professional people such as you, because there is a tremendous need in the world today.
Perhaps you don’t know, but in Japan when they take care of mentally dysfunctional people often they simply give them a shot. That’s all. They don’t have any basic or fundamental understanding of the gospel, so they cannot help effectively. I have a friend whose daughter had this experience. I told him not to take her to the hospital. We went to an LDS psychotherapist and within six months he was able to help her return to normal. We must have the pure love of Christ and pray always when we face the problems of our professions.

I am expecting a lot from you because the Church is going to need you, especially the LDS professional people. We will need you.

On Service

Lastly, could I just leave a few of my thoughts with you on service. I believe Man’s joy and his sufferings are the reflection of his daily habitual thinking. Whether he is happy or satisfied with his life is the product of what he thinks all day long—whether he is thinking of happiness for others. Our character mold is the sum of our feeling and thoughts. I believe the beauties in life come from betterment of service to others, with Christlike attributes. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once stated, “Celestial criteria measure service, not status.” His expression gives us a tremendous inspiration. J. Reuben Clark, Jr. thought King Benjamin had an everlasting impact on us. “It is not important where we serve, but how we serve.”

I strongly believe that the happiness of the human soul lies in humble service to others. What is the most beautiful thing you can see in life? The answer is someone who really serves others. The greatest symbolic beauty of our lives is simply to serve others, to give of ourselves. The eternal joy within us is a reflection of our hearts in thinking of other children of our heavenly Father. As we serve others it is so important that we have a pure heart—and a pure heart without a prejudiced mind. I believe the law of a pure heart and mind works like chemistry. Christlike pureness is truly celestial chemistry. It works so miraculously. If we have pure
vision and a pure heart, they will deeply affect the soul of that person, and it will expand.

Of this the Lord said, “But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin. And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done” (Doctrine and Covenants 50: 28–29). He has said that when we purify and cleanse ourselves, whatsoever we will ask in the name of the Lord we can accomplish. Because the greatest healing power comes from above, like dew from heaven it will touch the hearts of all of us. It shall be done.

Another thought: I believe that we will go as far as we believe we are able to go. You cannot get something from nothing without effort. In the same sense, you cannot get anything from negative thinking. We ought to be always sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Yes, you can go just as far as your vision.

You know, I shouldn’t take the time, but I would like to leave you my testimony. Three and a half years ago President Kimball called me and asked me to come to Salt Lake. As I arrived and went into his room, he said, “The Lord has called you to serve in this capacity. Will you accept?” I could hear, and I understood what he said, but I just could not comprehend it. I said, “President Kimball, could you kindly say it again for me?” With his husky voice he said, “The Lord has called you to be a general authority.” Then my wife and I just started crying—not because I was happy—I wasn’t! I wasn’t ready! I never thought in my whole life that I would be a general authority.

We cried for a long time, and finally President Kimball asked, “Are you there, you folks? Do you want to go back to the hotel to pray about it? Do you think you can accept?” I just couldn’t answer. Finally he said, “You folks stay here. I will go out.” He started walking out the door and said, “You folks talk and then tell me.” After about 30 minutes I said, “President Kimball, please, I just cannot accept this. I know the gospel is true. I know you are a prophet of the Lord.” And then he said, “Let me tell you
something. The Lord revealed to me that I should extend the call to you from the land of Japan. Is that a sufficient answer for you?"

My brothers and sisters, I hope and pray humbly that in a small way, a very small way, that I can serve the members of the Church and this great kingdom. I know that this gospel is true. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know it. I know it. I love Heavenly Father. I know he lives. There is no name under the heavens whereby we might be saved, other than Jesus of Nazareth. And this is His Church and we are His disciples. Thank you very much for your patience. I humbly pray this morning in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.