

Let Us Raise Our Voice of Warning

By President Henry B. Eyring First Counselor in the First Presidency

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Because the Lord is kind, He calls servants to warn people of danger. That call to warn is made harder and more important by the fact that the warnings of most worth are about dangers that people don't yet think are real. Think of Jonah. He fled at first from the Lord's call to warn the people of Nineveh who were blinded to the danger by sin. He knew that wicked people through the ages have rejected prophets and sometimes killed them. Yet when Jonah went forward with faith, the Lord blessed him with safety and success.

We can also learn from our experiences as parents and as children. Those of us who are parents have felt the anxiety of sensing danger our children cannot yet see. Few prayers are so fervent as those of a parent asking to know how to touch a child to move away from danger. Most of us have felt the blessing of hearing and heeding the warning voice of a parent.

I can still remember my mother speaking softly to me one Saturday afternoon when, as a little boy, I asked her for permission to do something I thought was perfectly reasonable and which she knew was dangerous. I still am amazed at the power she was granted, I believe from the Lord, to turn me around with so few words. As I remember them, they were: "Oh, I suppose you *could* do that. But the *choice* is yours." The only warning was in the emphasis she put on the words *could* and *choice*. Yet that was enough for me.

Her power to warn with so few words sprang from three things I knew about her. First, I knew she loved me. Second, I knew she had faced similar situations and had been blessed by making the right choice. And third, she had conveyed to me her sure testimony that the choice I had to make was so important that the Lord would tell me what to do if I asked Him. Love, example, and testimony: those were keys that day, and they have been whenever I have been blessed to hear and then heed the warning of a servant of the Lord.

Our ability to touch others with our warning voice matters to all who are covenant disciples of Jesus Christ. Here is the charge given to each of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: "Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" ([D&C 88:81](#)).

Our Duty to Warn

The duty to warn our neighbor falls on all of us who have accepted the covenant of baptism. We are to talk with nonmember friends and relatives about the gospel. Our purpose is to invite them to be taught by the full-time missionaries, who are called and set apart to teach. When a person has chosen to accept our invitation to be taught, a "referral" of great promise has been created, one far more likely to enter the waters of baptism and then to remain faithful.

As a member of the Church, you can expect that the full-time or the ward or branch missionaries will ask for the opportunity to help you make a list of people with whom you could share the gospel. The missionaries may suggest you think of relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances. They may ask you to set a date by which you will try to have the person or family prepared to be taught by the missionaries. I've had that experience. Because we in our family accepted that invitation from the missionaries, I was blessed to perform the baptism of a widow in her 80s, taught by sister missionaries.

When I placed my hands on her head to confirm her a member of the Church, I felt impressed to say that her choice to be baptized would bless generations of her family, after and before her. Even after she passed away, I was able to be in the temple with her son as he was sealed to her.

You may have had such experiences with people you have invited to be taught, and so you know that few moments in life are sweeter. The Lord's words are true for the missionaries and for all of us: "And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" ([D&C 18:16](#)).

The missionaries will help and encourage us, but whether such moments at the baptismal font and in the temple come more often will depend largely on how we see our charge and what we choose to do about it. The Lord would not use the word *warn* if there was no danger. Yet not many people we know sense it. They have learned to ignore the increasing evidence that society is unraveling and that their lives and family lack the peace they once thought was possible. That willingness to ignore the signs of danger can make it easy for you to think: "Why should I speak to anyone about the gospel who seems content? What danger is there to them or to me if I do or say nothing?"

Well, the danger may be hard to see, but it is real, both for them and for us. For instance, at some moment in the world to come, everyone you met in this life will know what you know now. They will know that the only way to live forever in association with our families and in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is to choose to enter into the gate by baptism at the hands of those with authority from God. They will know that the only way families can be together forever is to accept and keep sacred covenants offered in the temples of God on this earth. They will know that you knew. And they will remember whether you offered them what someone had offered you.

It's easy to say, "The time isn't right." But there is danger in procrastination. Years ago I worked for a man in California. He hired me; he was kind to me; he seemed to regard me highly. I may have been the only Latter-day Saint he ever knew well. I don't know all the reasons I found to wait for a better moment to talk with him about the gospel. I just remember my feeling of sorrow when I learned, after he had retired and I lived far away, that he and his wife had been killed in a late-night drive to their home in Carmel, California. He loved his wife. He loved his children. He had loved his parents. He loved his grandchildren, and he will love their children and will want to be with them forever.

Now, I don't know how the crowds will be handled in the world to come. But I suppose that I will meet him, that he will look into my eyes, and that I will see in them the question: "Hal, you knew. Why didn't you tell me?"

When I think of him and when I think of the widow I baptized and her family who will now be sealed to her and to each other, I want to do better. I want to increase my power to invite people to be taught. With that desire and with faith that God will help us, we will do better.

Love Comes First

Love always comes first. A single act of kindness will seldom be enough. The Lord described the love we must feel, and that those we invite must recognize in us, with words like these: "Charity suffereth long," and it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" ([1 Corinthians 13:4, 7](#)).

I've seen what "suffereth long" and "endureth all things" mean. A family moved into a house near us. The home was new, so I was part of the crew of Latter-day Saints who spent a number of nights putting in landscaping. I remember the last night, standing next to the husband of the family as we finished. He surveyed our work and said to us standing nearby, "This is the third yard you Mormons have put in for us, and I think this is the best." And then he quietly but firmly told me of the great satisfaction he got from membership in his own church, a conversation we had often in the years he lived there.

In all that time, the acts of kindness extended to him and his family never ceased, because the neighbors really came to love them. One evening I came home to see a truck in their driveway. I had been told they were moving to another state. I approached to see if I could help. I didn't recognize the man I saw loading household things

into the truck. He said quietly as I drew near, "Hello, Brother Eyring." I hadn't recognized him because he was the son, now grown older, who had lived there, married, and moved away. And because of the love of many for him, he was now a baptized member of the Church. I don't know the end of that story because it will have no end. But I know that it began with love.

Second, we will need to be better examples of what we invite others to do. In a darkening world, this command of the Savior will become more important: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" ([Matthew 5:16](#)).

Most of us are modest enough to think that our small candle of example might be too dim to be noticed. But you and your family are watched more than you may realize. Some time ago I had the chance to attend and speak at meetings with nearly 300 ministers and leaders of other churches. I visited alone with as many as I could. I asked them why they had been so attentive to my message, which was to recount the origins of the Church, to tell of the young Joseph Smith's First Vision and of living prophets. In every case, they gave essentially the same answer. They told a story of a person or a family—Church members they knew. Often I heard, "They were the finest family I have ever known." Often they spoke of some community effort or disaster response in which Church members worked in a remarkable way.

The people I met at those meetings could not yet recognize the truth in the doctrine, but they had seen its fruit in members' lives, and so they were ready to listen. They were ready to hear truths of the Restoration—that families can be sealed forever and that the gospel can change our very natures. They were ready because of your examples.

The third thing we must do better is to invite with testimony. Love and example will open the way, but we still have to open our mouths and bear testimony. We are helped by a simple fact: truth and choice are inseparably connected. There are some choices all children of our Heavenly Father must make to qualify for a testimony of spiritual truths, and once we know a spiritual truth, we must choose whether we will conform our lives to it. When we bear testimony of truth to our loved ones or friends, we must convey to them the choices they must make once they know that truth for themselves. There are two important examples: inviting someone to read the Book of Mormon and inviting someone to agree to be taught by the missionaries.

For us to know that the Book of Mormon is true, we must read it and make the choice found in Moroni: pray to know if it is true (see [Moroni 10:3–5](#)). When we have done that, we can testify from personal experience to our friends that they can make that choice and know the same truth. When they know the Book of Mormon is the word of God, they will face another choice: whether to accept your invitation to be taught by the missionaries. To make that invitation with testimony, you will need to know that the missionaries are called as servants of God.

You can gain that testimony by choosing to invite the missionaries into your home to teach your family or friends. Missionaries will welcome the opportunity. When you sit with them as they teach, as I have, you will know they are inspired with power beyond their years and their education. Then, when you invite others to choose to be taught by the missionaries, you will be able to bear testimony that they will teach the truth and that they offer the choices which lead to happiness.

An Assurance

Perhaps some of us may find it hard to believe that we love enough or that our lives are good enough or that our power to testify is sufficient for our invitations to our neighbors to be accepted. But the Lord knew we might feel that way. Listen to His encouraging words, which He directed to be placed at the first of the Doctrine and Covenants, when He gave us our charge: "And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days" ([D&C 1:4](#)).

And then listen to His description of the qualifications of those disciples—of us: "The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones" ([D&C 1:19](#)).

And then later: "That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world" ([D&C 1:23](#)).

And then again: "And inasmuch as they [are] humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high" ([D&C 1:28](#)).

That assurance was given to the first missionaries in the Church and to missionaries today. But it is given to all of us as well. We must have the faith that we can love enough and that the gospel has touched our lives enough that our invitation to choose can be heard as coming from the Master whose invitation it is.

His is the perfect example for what we are to do. You have felt His love and His caring even when you did not respond, as those you approach with the gospel may not respond. Time after time He has invited you to be taught by His servants. You may not have recognized that in the visits of home teachers and visiting teachers or in a bishop's phone call, but those were His invitations to be helped and taught. And the Lord has always made consequences clear and then allowed us to choose for ourselves.

What the Lord's servant Lehi taught his sons has always been true for all of us: "And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit" ([2 Nephi 2:28](#)).

And then from Jacob we receive this encouragement to meet our obligation to testify, as we must, that choosing to be taught by the missionaries is choosing to enter the way toward eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God: "Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life" ([2 Nephi 10:23](#)).

I testify that only accepting and living the restored gospel of Jesus Christ brings the peace the Lord promised in this life and the hope of eternal life in the world to come. I testify that we have been given the privilege and the obligation to offer the truth and the choices which lead to those blessings to our Heavenly Father's children, who are our brothers and our sisters. Jesus is the Christ, He lives, and this is His work.

Ideas for Home Teachers

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Create three keys made of paper, and label them "Love," "Example," and "Testimony." Tell President Eyring's story about his mother. Display the keys, and ask the family how these three keys worked in the story. Using examples from the article, explain the importance of warning our neighbors. Ask the family to comment on how the three keys can help us in warning our neighbors. End by reading President Eyring's testimony in the final paragraph.
2. Consider bringing some sweets or cookies for the family you are visiting. Place them where all can see, but don't offer to share them. Tell the story of the man in California for whom President Eyring worked. Discuss how President Eyring felt after learning of his death. Ask the family how they would feel if you left without sharing the sweets with them. Discuss ways we can share the gospel with others.

Photo illustrations by David Stoker

Detail from *He Is Risen*, by Del Parson

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