

ELDER MARLIN K. JENSEN

*First Quorum of the Seventy*

I am both grateful and anxious about being here this evening. Grateful—because to be in the company of good people is one of life’s greatest blessings. Anxious—because I recognize in this exceptional faculty and student body qualities of intellect and spirituality that are remarkable. Thus, my desire to say something of worth is great. • I must observe that I am well acquainted with Bruce Hafen, your former dean, having once served briefly but joyfully as his junior missionary companion in Germany. His influence on my life has been significant and much appreciated. Your current dean, Reese Hansen, and I

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were fraternity brothers at Utah State University for one year in the early 1960s. Maybe the only truly honest thing to say about our association of that brief period is that he was probably about as surprised by my call as a General Authority as I was by his as dean of the Law School! Lest you misinterpret this, I hasten to say that it is difficult for two 18-year-olds to look 30 years downstream and have even the slightest idea of what the future may hold. Certainly, he is today a man of great capacity, spirituality, and good

of unconsciousness.” I feel a deep yearning tonight for the Spirit of the Lord, because, in Nephi’s words “when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).

**W**hat I wish to share with you may seem prosaic and ordinary. You may even feel that you already know it. If so, you may want to ponder this insight contained in some intriguing lines by T.S. Eliot: “We shall not cease from explora-

today. We do not need to search endlessly for our self-worth—we brought it with us.

Notwithstanding the beauty and simplicity of the Gospel plan given us by God, it is not always easy to follow. Though we know our origin and potential destiny, we can easily lose our way and wander aimlessly for years, even for a lifetime, trying to get “someplace” and become “somebody.” The danger of this may be even greater for lawyers than for most.

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sense. If you had been in his home earlier tonight where we have been, and felt of the Spirit there, you would realize that you have much more to learn from Reese and Kathryn Hansen than rules of law. They are fine people. To work with them and associate with them daily will be one of your great blessings in life.

Because of the significance of this occasion for me, I have done something I do not ordinarily do—I have reduced my remarks to writing. This is in sharp contrast to my usual speaking style, something my supportive wife has occasionally described as “stream

tion. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” T.S. Eliot’s words, if I understand them correctly, need not describe the condition in which we find ourselves. As Latter-day Saints, we shouldn’t have to arise every morning and ask ourselves the existential questions over and over again. We know—on the strength of modern prophets, the scriptures and our own spiritual impressions—that God lives, that He is our Father, that He is interested in us, and that His gospel has been restored and is here on this earth

months as a first-year law student. My head was full of rules of law, cases, procedures, and an increasing awareness of a new world made up of “issues.” I even recall once responding to my wife’s cheery “Good morning, Dear,” with “That’s not the issue.” I’m certain I reached the peak of my intellectual powers by the end of that first year. If I had been unleashed on the legal community then, I’m certain no problem would have gone unsolved. I hope it’s a healthy commentary on my personal development to admit that I have become a little less knowledgeable and a little more tentative every year since

that first one.

Because one result of a legal education is to make one more questioning, more analytical, perhaps even more critical, it is important that Latter-day Saint lawyers keep certain eternal truths firmly in mind. This may be the Gospel equivalent of indulging in some spiritual "presumptions." As you know, this is a helpful device employed by the law that allows inference of a fact on proof of circumstance that usually or necessarily attends such a fact.

**T**he "presumption" of which I wish to speak tonight is of the everlasting nature of life and the gospel. Some interesting words appear in scripture concerning this idea: Words such as *everlasting*, *eternal*, *forever*, and *from everlasting to everlasting*. There are also statements about the Lord's course being one eternal round. I am certain that there is nothing you could do for your happiness, now or hereafter, any more important than to cling tightly to this truth and to keep it ever present in your minds.

The scriptures are full of commentary concerning this matter. Often the prophets stress its importance by directing our minds back toward our origin with God, and by asking us to reflect ahead on our possible future with Him. Abraham, for instance, refers to our beginnings as our "first estate," and teaches that "They who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate" (Abraham 3:26). To me, "keeping our first estate" may well mean keeping our spiritual perspective about the everlasting nature of life and the gospel. Retaining such a frame of reference can have significant eternal consequences.

Alma is an example of a prophet who asks us to look ahead and to visualize our future with God to remind us that there is life after life. (By the way, visualization is presently a popular psychological device and my only regret is that it is more frequently used to improve one's free-throw shooting than one's Christian behavior.) Alma asks us: "Do you look forward with an eye of

faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?" (Alma 5:15).

This ability to see so clearly the eternal nature of life and the gospel is, I think, a distinguishing characteristic of a seer. It may even be one reason King Limhi remarked that "a seer is greater than a prophet" (Mosiah 8:15). Ammon explained that "a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come" (Mosiah 8:17). This may also be the reason the redemption of the dead is so often on the minds of the prophets near the end of their lives. Joseph Smith, for example, wrote in 1842, Doctrine and Covenants 128, that: "I now resume the subject of the baptism for the dead, as that subject seems to occupy my mind and press itself upon my feelings the strongest." It was toward the end of his life that Joseph F. Smith had his great vision of the redemption of the dead, which is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 138. Can it be that as their lives drew to a close, these great seers were worried about those in their past who were also shortly to be in their present?

This sweeping and eternal view of life, which the prophets clearly possess, must be grasped and retained by each of us. Almost everything of worth in life, I think, follows this realization—honesty, empathy, the setting of proper priorities, balance, consistency, even the will and strength to change our lives and to endure to the end.

A practical illustration of the value of getting firmly in mind that life and the gospel are everlasting can be found in our view here on earth of property and other material things. We have had an interesting experience concerning this matter in our own family in recent years.

**S**everal Christmases ago, my parents asked if we would like to receive a gift of a 1978 Malibu automobile that had been driven only 35,000 grandmotherly miles. Since we had several teenage drivers and lived a considerable distance from the high

school, we gratefully accepted their offer and the car was delivered. Though mechanically sound, it really wasn't an attractive means of transportation and our older children did not drive it if any other vehicle was available. They gave it the nickname "Black Bullet," and it was reported to us that it was always parked in the outermost recesses of the high school parking lot. Even the younger children were apparently embarrassed by the Black Bullet because when I would drive them to elementary school in it, they would say, "Dad, don't stop, just slow down and we'll just jump out."

My wife and I had never really discussed our feelings about the car until one evening when we had had dinner together at a nice restaurant. We were just leaving and about ready to get into the "Bullet" when we spotted a prominent couple approaching us from across the parking lot. In that moment, my wife's feelings concerning the car surfaced rapidly, and she asked, "Should we just walk past the Bullet as though we don't own it?" Not being nearly so proud, I replied, "No, let's just get in and hope they don't see us!" As we settled into our seats, the couple stopped along side the car and we exchanged pleasantries. While the husband and I talked, I noticed his wife's eyes roaming over the Black Bullet's peeling vinyl and missing hubcaps. They walked on into the restaurant, and I strained mightily to read their lips in the rear view mirror. If I read correctly, I believe the wife said to her husband, "Can you believe that car the Jensens are driving?" All the way home, my wife and I had one of those conversations that married couples should have with greater frequency. Our conclusion: In the eternal scope of things, in the lives of two parents and eight children who believe that the Gospel and life are everlasting, the car being driven at any given moment in time has absolutely nothing to do with anything of lasting value.

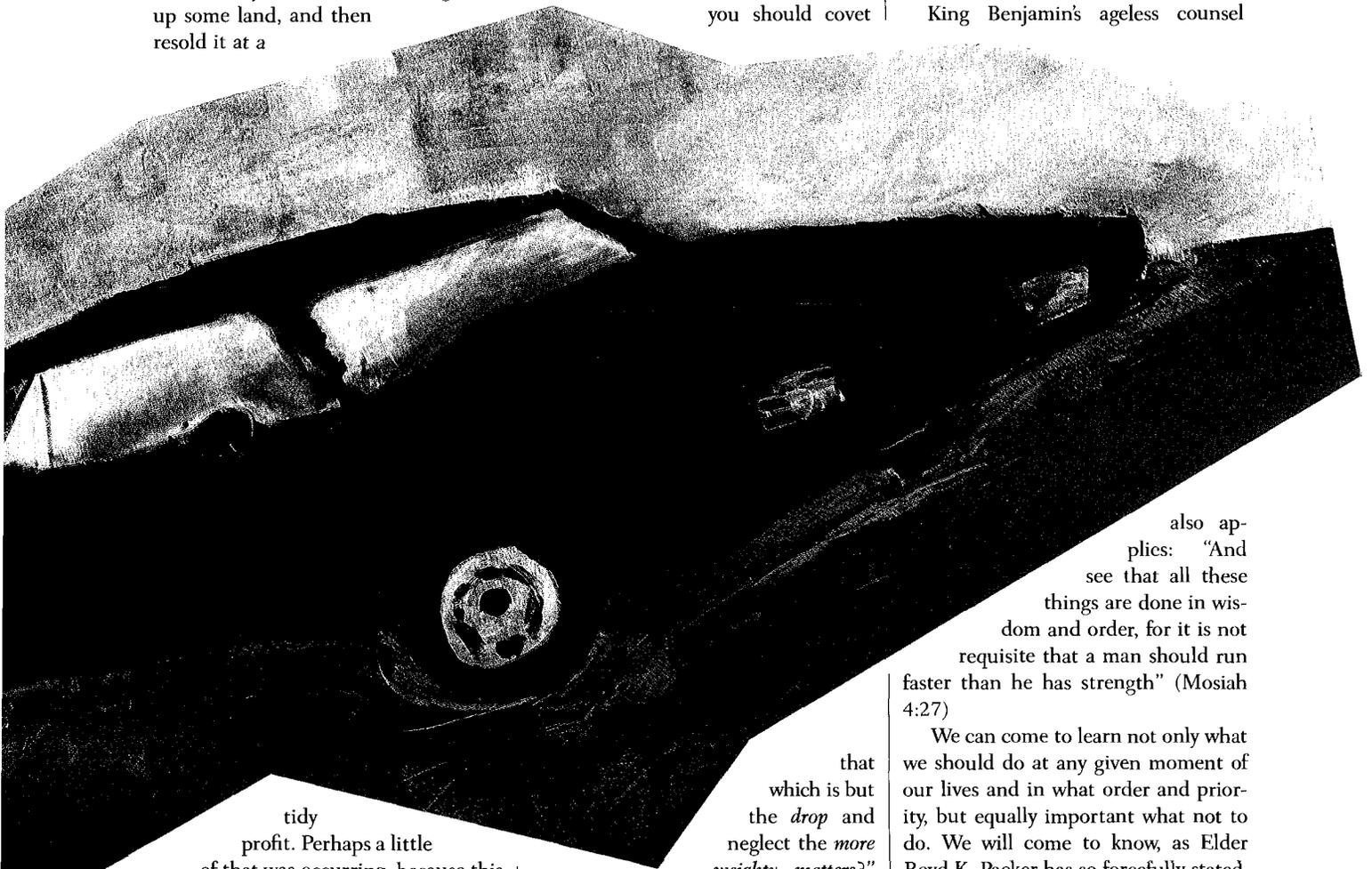
Shortly after that experience, I came upon a passage in the Doctrine and Covenants which further encouraged our resolve to always have a Black Bullet of some type in our lives and to

ensure that our children enjoy that privilege also. In Doctrine and Covenants 117:4, the Lord poses an interesting question. I do not know much about the background of this scripture, but believe it has to do with that early period in the history of our Church when the Latter-day Saints were moving frequently I have sometimes thought about the possibility that if one were a sharp real estate agent one might have preceded the Saints to a new area by a few months, bought up some land, and then resold it at a

made the earth? Do I not hold the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth?" Isn't that an interesting passage for those who are in Saudi Arabia tonight? Verse seven continues, "Therefore, will I not make solitary places to bud and to blossom and to bring forth in abundance? saith the Lord" Verse eight is the clincher: "Is there not room enough on the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman and on the plains of Olaha Shinehah, or the land where Adam dwelt, that you should covet

more clearly other important issues of life For example, we struggle often with the challenge of striking an appropriate balance among family, church, and professional responsibilities With the duration of eternity in mind, the wise teaching in Ecclesiastes becomes much more meaningful: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; . A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away" (Ecl 3:1, 6).

King Benjamin's ageless counsel



tidy profit. Perhaps a little of that was occurring, because this section is directed in part at least to the land agents of the time, to whom in verse four the Lord says, "Let them repent of all their sins and of their covetous desires." And then he poses this interesting question: "For what is property unto me? saith the Lord"

He then answers his question in verse six: "Have I not the fowls of heaven, the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the mountains. Have I not

(emphasis added).

Lawyers, like many others, can easily lose sight of the everlastingness of life and spend too much time and energy coveting that which is but the drop, and thereby neglect the more weighty matters These, the Savior taught, are justice (can you imagine a lawyer neglecting that), love, and mercy.

With the concept of eternity firmly fixed in our minds, we can also see

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also applies: "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order, for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27)

We can come to learn not only what we should do at any given moment of our lives and in what order and priority, but equally important what not to do. We will come to know, as Elder Boyd K. Packer has so forcefully stated, that "The choice of life is not between fame and obscurity, nor is the choice between wealth and poverty The choice is between good and evil, and that is a very different matter indeed" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 21).

I met a couple recently who exemplify the life of pace and balance that the gospel, I think, prescribes I meet such individuals frequently Almost all of them are unremarkable except for

their quiet goodness and the inner calm and happiness they seem to radiate. These two are in their early 70s and have just been called to preside over the operation of a regional family history center. They have raised a solid family and own a well-kept, if modest, home. The husband was known, before his retirement as a dependable and capable employee at a government installation. They have no great net worth but possess properties sufficient for their needs. They have raised a garden each year, made many of their own home and car repairs, and somehow arranged things so that their children had the opportunity of perspiring while engaging in activities other than just jogging or tennis. (Notice, by the way, how I carefully avoided the use of the word *sweat*, which was mentioned by the Lord to Adam, but is now quite unacceptable in most social circles.)

During all their lives, this couple's love for one another and their family has been nourished and deepened. They have carefully provided their children and themselves with good friends, good books, good music, and good conversations. Life has not spared them challenges or trials, but with their view of eternity, so far they've had what it takes. Service has been important to them, some in the community, some in the Church. He has been a bishop, she has been a teacher and leader in the auxiliaries of the Church. Most recently they have served a mission together, spent some years as temple ordinance workers, and are now becoming more seriously involved in family history. They are actively involved with their children and grandchildren. There is nothing noticeably hectic or stressful about their existence, though one does sense a definite feeling of constancy and even of mild urgency, particularly in matters concerning their family and the gospel. When I come to know people such as these, I feel inspired and I realize that President Snow's catchy couplet is not just good verse, but is a description of reality: "As man now is, God once was. As God now is, man may be" (*Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, 46)

We are not left alone in all this, brothers and sisters, with merely our "presumptions" to guide us. The prophet Nephi promised: "For behold, again I say unto you, that if ye will enter in by the way and receive the Holy Ghost, *it will show unto you all things that you should do*" (2 Nephi 32:5; italics added). Jacob said it just as plainly, and maybe even more beautifully: "For the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls" (Jacob 4:13). I cherish that phrase, "things as they really are, and things as they really will be." It is for me an expression of ultimate reality and can only be fully appreciated when we keep the everlasting nature of life and the Gospel fully in mind. It's also similar to Joseph Smith's definition of truth, which is a "knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24). I feel that "these things" can and must be known now and that despite T.S. Eliot's view, expressed earlier, we who have the Gospel need not explore endlessly for this much-needed knowledge about life.

Finally, the challenge for us all, and maybe especially for lawyers, is to apply what we know to what we do. But

some of us never get around to it. We are always in the contemplation of it. Emerson said, "We never live, we are always in the expectation of living." And so it is. We like to know about things, we like to read about them, to analyze them, to study them, and especially as lawyers, to talk about them. But we never get around to really practicing them.

What is it then that our knowledge should lead us to do? Simply this:

Be good

Love your spouse and family

Study the scriptures

Say your prayers

Seek the Spirit

Receive the ordinances

Keep the covenants

Serve your fellow men

When you have done these things—which are clearly the weightier matters of the law—you will surely not have "left the others undone." You will also be as concerned about the pro bono as about the billable categories of your time sheets. You will probably find that synthesizing is more enjoyable and productive than analyzing. And you may also discover that a fair compromise is often more satisfying than a hard won victory. More importantly, you will enjoy a fullness of being with those you love, forever and ever. Of this I testify, expressing gratitude to him who made eternal life possible.

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