

"By Mine Own Voice or by the Voice of My Servants"

Maren Mouritsen and Carolyn Rasmus

*Maren Mouritsen is Emeritus professor of ancient scripture,
former assistant vice president and dean of student life, BYU;
lover of nature and youth*

*Carolyn Rasmus is a retired instructor, Orem LDS Institute;
EdD in physical education and child development;
former administrative assistant to Young Women general presidency*

© 2000 Maren Mouritsen and Carolyn Rasmus.
All rights reserved.

CR: Because we know that the hymns of Zion invite the spirit of the Lord and unify our hearts, we've chosen to begin this session by reviewing the words of the hymn "We Listen to a Prophet's Voice." It also contains the principles that we are going to be discussing this hour.

We listen to a prophet's voice and hear the Savior too,
With love he bids us do the work the Lord would have us do.
The Savior calls his chosen seer to preach the word of God,
That men might learn to find the path marked by the iron rod.
In ev'ry land, in ev'ry tongue, our prophet will be heard;
How swiftly round the world his voice reveals the gospel word!
The sacred message that he brings will witness and agree
With ev'ry prophet called of God throughout earth's history.
Hosannah! Let our praise ascend unto the Savior's throne;
Rejoice! The prophet has confirmed that by Him we are known.
Attend, ye earth! The prophet speaks; come listen and obey.
He is the man who holds the keys of priesthood pow'r today.

MM: About a month ago, it was the good fortune of our family to receive quite accidentally a few tickets to the first session of general conference on Sunday morning in the new Conference Center. With a handful of very excited young children, we headed off and arrived more than an hour early. What would we do? We walked the halls and talked about the building, sat down and read from the *Children's Friend*, and then came the teaching moment. My young nephew, who had been sitting very thoughtfully, looked up into my face and said, "Aunt Maren, why is Gordon B. Hinckley a prophet?" In the

moments that we discussed that issue, five questions came to light: Why do we have prophets? What is prophecy and why is it important? What do prophets do? Why do we need prophets today? and, What difference does it make that we have a living prophet?

I thought, *Wow, those are exactly the questions the Savior was addressing in the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, which is his preface to the entire book of the Doctrine and Covenants.*

WHY DO WE HAVE PROPHETS?

CR: The first thing that came to my mind when you said, "Why do we have prophets?" is two of the Articles of Faith: the sixth, which says: "We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth"; and the ninth, which says: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, [and then I think this is where we are today] and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

You referred to the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 1. We frequently talk about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints being the "true and living church" (D&C 1:30)-true and living in the sense that (1) we have a living prophet; (2) it's founded on the truth of a living God; and (3) revelation continues to come to the prophet today. It is the true and living church.

MM: The fact that the heavens are open and revelation does come when the heavens are open is a very important principle with regard to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Primitive Church as is mentioned in the Article of Faith (or in other words, the original church as it was established by the Savior) is made very clear in the scriptures: what that church is to be like, what it's to look like, and who is to be in it.

Paul, in his travels through Corinth and to Ephesus, made these familiar statements: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers" (1 Corinthians 12:28). Later to the Ephesians he says that we might not be "strangers or foreigners" but that we might be "fellowcitizens," and it is based on the foundation of apostles and Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:19-20). So those apostles are foundation stones, the capstone, keystone being Jesus Christ himself: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in a unity of the faith, and of a knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:12-13). Apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ, until we all come to a unity of understanding his divinity.

CR: Think of how many opportunities President Hinckley has had to speak to the media. Certainly the Mike Wallace show. I was just reviewing that the other day. President Hinckley spoke in general conference on the day that show was to air, and he made the comment that he felt "it was better to lean into the stiff wind of opportunity than to simply hunker down and do nothing." Not having seen the footage, President Hinckley said, "If it turns out to be favorable, I will be grateful. Otherwise, I pledge I'll never get my foot in that

kind of trap again" I don't know if he's gotten his foot in any kind of a trap, but when he was interviewed on "Larry King Live" without any rehearsal at all, Larry King-out of the chute-said to him, "What is your role?" meaning, "What is your role as a prophet." I think his answer is pertinent here as we look at why we have prophets.

This is what President Hinckley said: "My role is to declare doctrine. My role is to stand as an example before the people. My role is to be a voice in defense of the truth. My role is to serve as a conservator of those values which are important in our civilization and society. My role is to lead." That is a pretty succinct statement of what prophets are and do.

It might be helpful, too, at this point, to think about what we have in the Bible Dictionary. When I turned to the Bible Dictionary as we were studying together, I was going to use that definition. Then in the process of my study, I came across a statement by President Anthony W. Ivins, who was serving as a counselor to Heber J. Grant. In the October 1925 conference session, he said much of what now appears in our Bible Dictionary under the word prophet: "A prophet was, and is, one called to act as God's messenger. He is to teach men the character of God, and define and make known to the people, his will. He is to denounce sin, and declare the punishment of transgression. He is to be above all else a preacher of righteousness. . . . But his direct, and most important calling is to be a forth-teller . . . , rather than a foreteller of what is to come."

Isn't that fascinating language? A forth-teller, meaning to present to the people the doctrine, to speak forth on things that we need to know. We often think of a prophet as foretelling the future. But consider even the word *prophet* itself: the prefix *pro* means "forth." So a prophet declares or states forth the word of God.

MM: I remember when I was in college talking with one of my friends who was a good person, an honorable person, but not disposed toward being a Christian. One of her complaints was, "That's nothing but fortune telling." But the point is forth-telling, as opposed to fortune telling, which is a very important point.

WHAT IS PROPHECY, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Prophecy is the word of God. It is the light, life, and intelligence that comes from heaven through a human being, who we know is a prophet, to give us guidance and direction. The Prophet Joseph Smith indicates that prophecy is the obtaining of the mind and the will of God (see D&C 8:2-3). When the Savior was with his apostles on the coast of Caesarea Philippi and they were gathered about him, he wanted to know if they really knew who he is and what he is about. That may seem strange, but it is accurate. He asked them, Who am I? The apostles responded, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some, Elias; and others, Jeremias." But he said, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered (and you know the response), "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To which the Savior responded, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:13-18). The issue of "what rock" is a very important point that we need to make quite clear. The rock is not a church and not an organization, which may seem often

confusing in the scripture. The rock is the rock of revelation. Joseph Smith says, and Jesus in his teaching says, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). What rock? The rock of revelation.

Hyrum Smith received direct counsel from the Savior about his missionary efforts. He is told in Doctrine and Covenants 11:23-2: "Hyrum, my son; . . . build upon my rock, which is my gospel; deny not the spirit of revelation, nor the spirit of prophecy; for wo unto him that denieth these things."

Given the scriptures, which are recorded prophecy and revelation, it is little wonder the prophets say search the scriptures, listen to the prophets, and be diligent. Joseph Smith said: "The plea of many in this day is, that we have no right to receive revelations; but if we do not get revelations, we do not have the oracles of God; and if they do not have the oracles of God, they are not the people of God." Constantly in the scriptures we are called the children of the covenant and the children of God. So we need diligently to search the prophets and to listen to the prophets.

Interestingly, we have very clear instructions in the scriptures with regard to how we can receive revelation. Those scriptures are recorded in many places, but I love 1 Nephi 11. This is one of my favorite parts of the Book of Mormon. Nephi has killed a man, and he is essentially on the run. Though he was divinely inspired to take the action he took, he has to be subject to civil law, and so he and his family leave with the plates and the genealogies—the important things that have come to mean so much to us. I'm not much for formulas, but here's one of the best I know, if you want to know how to get revelation: "For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen [remember his father had had a mighty vision], and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat pondering [when was the last time you pondered, truly pondered something that matters to you?] in mine heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot. And the Spirit said unto me [the Spirit asked him a question]: what desirest thou?"

He could have asked for anything. He could have said, "Get the local police department off my back." But what he says is this (and this is the question that relates to us):

"I desire to behold the things which my father saw" (1 Nephi 11:1-2). In other words, I need to understand what's in the vision because I know what's in it is a key for all eternity. So he asks, What's in that dream?

CR: In the October 1997 general conference, President Hinckley talked about fifty working temples, noted there were nineteen in process, and then said: "There are many areas of the Church that are remote, where membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the future." He asked, "Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of temple ordinances?" Now use the words from Nephi—*desired, believed, pondered*. Listen to President Hinckley's language. "While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright

and clear.

"We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all the facilities to administer all of the ordinances." That is exactly the same formula given by Nephi. It's a little instructive to us to recognize in two and half years he spoke of fifty temples. As of today we have eighty-one in operation-thirty-nine that have been announced, and five that have been dedicated since April conference less than a month ago.

MM: Revelation, then, is the light and the mind and the will and the intelligence of God that comes to us through man as prophecy. We can't be like flamingos standing on one leg because eventually you have to put both of them down. Revelation and prophecy go hand in hand. They give us kind of a front row seat on the future, a panoramic view, if you will, of what will come and what we need to do about what's to come. So we need prophets and we need revelation and we need prophecy because we need to know the mind and will of the Lord.

WHAT DO PROPHETS DO?

CR: We came up with three words that, as I look on it, are pretty good descriptors of what prophets do in just a broad, brush stroke. We've talked about *teach*, *warn*, and *testify*. I'd like to talk for just a minute more about *teach*.

One of the most powerful statements that has been made about prophets' speaking was made by President Harold B. Lee in a 1974 general conference. He said, "If you want to know what the Lord would have the Saints know and to have his guidance for the next six months, get a copy of the proceedings of this conference, and you will have the latest word of the Lord as far as the Saints are concerned."

Depending on where you live, you will receive the *Ensign* or the *Liahona*. Both contain what President Lee was talking about: the mind and the will of the Lord concerning the Saints for the next six months. Because they look so much like magazines or periodicals, it may be easy sometimes to toss them aside. But we are being taught here that this is the word of the Lord concerning the Saints for the next six months.

Consider this idea as we think about prophets teaching: in one of President Hinckley's introductory statements as conference began, he said something I have thought a lot about. To the congregation, to all of us, to the Church, he said, "You have prayed that you might hear things that will help you with your problems and add strength to your faith." I wonder how many of us prepare ourselves in that way. I think he was teaching us. And then he said, "I assure you that we have prayed also. . . . We have prayed that we might be prompted to say those words which will build faith and testimony and which will become answered prayers for those who will hear." Can you imagine the power of a general conference if every Church member prayed in advance for specific answers to specific questions? It is exactly the same process we mentioned with Nephi and that we shared from President Hinckley concerning the smaller temples-asking questions.

MM: So often the answers come, and yet we don't recognize them as answers because we aren't prepared to receive them.

CR: And maybe we haven't even asked the question, so when the answers come, we don't know. Let me just give a personal example. When we receive a new calling we're especially thoughtful. I had been called as a stake Relief Society president, and I was specifically seeking ways in which I might perform my calling better. I had had a sense that it was important to be out visiting with the sisters. There weren't any talks that conference about Relief Society, but President Hinckley said one sentence that caught my attention. I could hardly wait for the printed copy, and it is what I've used as a guideline in serving in my calling. President Hinckley said, "I am determined that while I have strength I will get out among the people at home and abroad." Then he listed six things that he wanted to do: "to express my appreciation, to give encouragement, to build faith, to teach, to add my testimony to theirs and at the same time to draw strength from them." Now, I'm not President Hinckley, and I'm not going all over the world, but in my little stake of Zion, there's no reason that I couldn't do those things, and it made a big difference to me. I think it came as an answer.

MM: One day many years ago, when this women's conference was a student conference, Sister Camilla Kimball was one of our speakers. I always like to ask this question of people whom I admire and love and respect, so as I was sitting and chatting with her, I asked, "Sister Kimball, what's the thing that you most regret not having done in your life?"

I expected a response such as "Well, I didn't raise my children right," or whatever it is that we think we should have done that we didn't do. But Sister Kimball turned to me, and with those piercing eyes she said, "The thing I regret most not having done in my life is not having paid more attention to the Spirit and having not done the things that the Spirit clearly told me to do. They were simple things," she said, "like a phone call or sitting down and reading the scriptures. It was the simple things, and I dismissed them." That was a great teaching moment about the Spirit, about revelation, and about a very wise woman.

CR: President Hinckley followed his statement with, "I invite you to listen, listen if you will by the power of the Spirit." Exactly what you were saying.

MM: *To teach and to warn.* To warn is one of the most difficult things a prophet has to do. Think about your children. Prophetically, we are all God's children and thereby a steward of a prophet. How difficult it is to warn your children, and how easy it is for them to not heed the warnings. But as Elder M. Russell Ballard has said, "As Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our duty to be watchmen on the tower, warning Church members to be aware of false prophets and false teachers who lie in wait to ensnare and destroy faith and testimony. Today we warn you that there are false prophets and false teachers arising [and you can take that however you would like: movies, books, Internet]; and if we are not careful, even those who are among the faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will fall victim to their deception." In an increasingly difficult world, as

wonderful as it is, it's increasingly difficult to live in it. And that is a powerful warning.

President David O. McKay was such a striking man with that beautiful shock of white hair and very large stature. I remember visiting President McKay with my father when I was quite young. I'm not sure how old I was, but I remember the moment. As my father and I entered the office, President McKay was sitting behind his desk with his head in his hands. My father said to him, "President, you seem discouraged." President McKay looked up. I have no idea what prompted the serious moment in his thinking, but he looked up and said, "Don't they understand that I warn them and I chastise because I love them?"

I think that must be among the most difficult tasks a prophet has. And we have received warning after warning after warning. Hopefully we'll have the wisdom to heed the warnings.

CR: Think of our day and what we've seen in just the last few years. The Proclamation on the Family probably hangs in many homes around the world. It's been translated into numerous languages. It was introduced in a Relief Society meeting by President Hinckley himself. I've always been fascinated by the paragraph he spoke before he actually read the proclamation because it emphasizes this same idea of warning. He said, "With so much of sophistry that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning the standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn." Exactly what you were talking about. He goes on to say then that they are going to issue the proclamation. I was sitting in a class, and, as I said to somebody, I had just read that wording in the Doctrine and Covenants. It didn't take very long to find out where. It's in Doctrine and Covenant 89. Listen to the language; it almost seems to me to apply to the proclamation as well as to what follows in the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord, speaking through the Prophet Joseph says, "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you" (v. 4; emphasis added). So we see it then; we see it now.

I don't know if I've ever heard President Hinckley speak any more plainly than when he spoke in May 1998. Think of a prophet. It's easy to picture in our minds to picture an Old Testament prophet doing this, but think of a modern day prophet standing at a pulpit saying, in President Hinckley's words, "I plead with you . . . to keep yourselves free from the stains of the world. You must not indulge in sleazy talk. . . . You must not tell sultry jokes. You must not fool around with the Internet to find pornographic material. You must not dial a long-distance telephone number to listen to filth. You must not rent videos with pornography of any kind. This salacious stuff simply is not for you. Stay away from pornography as you would avoid a serious disease. It is as destructive."

MM: I can think of one more person who said it a little more strongly than even President Hinckley has said it, and it was the Savior himself in Doctrine and Covenants 1, from which our theme comes from today: "By mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (v. 38). If your scriptures are with you, read along with me.

"Hearken, O ye people of my church." He first addresses the membership of the Church.

"I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of sea, listen together." Come and counsel and listen.

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men [not just the members of church, but to all men], and there is none to escape." That is not a Dale Carnegie lecture on ease and pleasure.

"And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed." When the Lord comes to interview me, I am not interested in your knowing from the housetop what I did wrong, so I am very willing to listen, I hope. "And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days" (vv. 1-4).

That was the Lord's preface to the entire Book of Covenants and Commandments, now known to us as the Doctrine and Covenants.

CR: Section 1 starts with the word *hearken*, and it's used several times. It is easy to see the word *hear* and the word *ear* in the word *hearken*. The dictionary says that to hearken is "to listen." That's the first definition, but it also says "to give heed to, to obey, to comply with." The hymn we read at the very beginning talks about our need to listen and obey, which really is to hearken.

MM: That's our responsibility, to listen and to obey. The third role of a prophet is to *testify*. One of the remarkable things of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that we have the opportunity to be prophets ourselves. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that a prophet is a person who knows by personal revelation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, because "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," and each one of us individually is entitled to that prophetic revelation in our own lives. But there are special witnesses called, those who hold the keys, those who have an apostolic ministry, and it is important for us to understand that their witness matters to us. We can go back to the Book of Mormon and the dialogue in which Sherem is challenged by Jacob. In effect Jacob asks, Haven't you read the scriptures? And Sherem answers, Well, I certainly have. And then Jacob says, Well, if you had read the scriptures, you would understand that all of them from the very beginning testify of the mission of Jesus Christ (see Jacob 7:10-11).

I read 3 Nephi very carefully because for the most part that passage is the Lord speaking directly through his prophets to us and directly to us. This is what he says in 3 Nephi 20:24:

"Verily I say unto you, yea, and all the prophets from Samuel [Samuel being the first Israelite prophet to the Israelite nations] and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have testified of me."

The centrality of the foundation of the Church, the centrality of all the scriptures, is the ministry and the mission of Jesus Christ. I'm always pleased when I hear young women stand and say the Young Women's Theme, that they will stand for truth and righteousness, they will stand as a witness of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places. The Relief Society Declaration indicates that we are united in our sisterhood, in our devotion to Jesus Christ.

It was a thrilling moment for our family to be in the Conference Center for that Sunday morning session of conference when President Hinckley bore this witness of the Savior, a special witness and an apostolic witness, a prophetic witness of Jesus Christ. "*He is my Savior and my Redeemer*. Through giving His life in pain and unspeakable suffering, He has reached down to lift me and each of us and all the sons and daughters of God from the abyss of eternal darkness following death. He has provided something better—a sphere of light and understanding, growth and beauty where we may go forward on the road that leads to eternal life. My gratitude knows no bounds. My thanks to my Lord has no conclusion.

"*He is my God and my King*. From everlasting to everlasting, He will reign and rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. To His dominion there will be no end. To His glory there will be no night. "None other can take His place.

None other ever will. Unblemished and without fault of any kind, He is the Lamb of God, to whom I bow and through whom I approach my Father in Heaven.

"Isaiah foretold of His coming:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace' (Isa. 9:6).

"Those who walked with Him in Palestine bore witness of His divinity. The centurion who watched Him die declared in solemnity, 'Truly this was the Son of God' (Matt. 27:54). "Thomas, on seeing His resurrected body, cried out in wonder, 'My Lord and my God' (John 20:28).

"Those in this hemisphere to whom He appeared heard the voice of the Father introduce Him: 'Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name' (3 Ne. 11:7).

"And the Prophet Joseph, speaking in this dispensation, declared:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father' (D&C 76:2223).

"To which I add my own witness that He is 'the way, the truth, and the life' and that 'no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]' (John 14:6).

"Gratefully, and with love undiminished, I bear witness of these things in His Holy name, even the name of Jesus the Christ, amen."

WHY DO WE NEED PROPHETS TODAY?

What a blessing is such a witness when we are threatened with false prophets. That was exactly the problem with the Nephite nations. They had everything-wealth, prosperity-and they chose to kill each other, to slaughter one another. Mormon in his commentary about that civilization says one of the problems that they had was that they denied the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of revelation (see Helaman 4:12, 23). We do indeed need prophets today.

With two of our very dearest friends, we stood upon the Mount of Olives and read the verses I'm going to read next about why we need prophets today. It was a very private moment. The Savior had gathered his disciples around him. He would not be with them much longer. And they asked him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). In other words, they asked, When will you come again and when will the world end? They had been talking of these things.

Christ said that except for the Father no one knows the day and the hour- no one knows, but I'll give you some hints. And here are a couple of the hints in Matthew 24: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (v. 5). "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (v. 11).

We need prophets today that we may not be deceived. The Nephite nation was deceived because they had begun to disbelieve the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of revelation. Listen to this: "And the judgments of God did stare them in the face" (Helaman 4:23).

CR: When you talk about the judgments of God staring them in the face, I think of an event in Church history, October 1838, upper Missouri. Most of the Saints were in Far West, although there were small outlying settlements, one of which was owned by Jacob Haun. The Prophet Joseph wanted the people to gather, knowing that together there would be more safety. A record of that time indicates that Brother Joseph sent a note to Haun to inform the Saints that were living there to gather to Far West. But Mr. Haun did not deliver the message. The Prophet Joseph said, "Up to this day God has given me wisdom to save the people who took counsel. None had ever been killed who had abode by my counsel." And then he recorded the sad truth that innocent lives might have been saved at Haun's Mill if the message had both been delivered and received.

MM: I have made a specific effort this year to read the writings of Joseph F. Smith that we are studying in Relief Society and priesthood lessons. I love that man, a man of

intellect and sheer wisdom. He wasn't afraid to tell you when the yellow light was blinking and about to turn red. This is what he had to say about the kind of problem at Hauns' Mill: "[Beware of] the proud and self-vaunting ones, [I love this line] who read by the lamp of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving; who have become a law unto themselves, and so pose as the sole judges of their own doings."

We need a prophet. As smart and as able as we are, we need a prophet to help us understand.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE THAT WE HAVE A LIVING PROPHET TODAY?

CR: Why is President Hinckley a prophet? The greatest reason I know why we have a prophet is explained in the Doctrine and Covenants: "And if my people will hearken unto my voice [there's that hearken again, listen and obey], and unto the voice of my [prophets] whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place" (D&C 124:45).

Interestingly enough, Christ himself said almost that same thing when he appeared to the Nephites. In 3 Nephi 12, he's called the Twelve and now turns to the multitude: "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you" (v. 1).

Perhaps that's one of the reasons President Hinckley, in a closing address about a year ago, said, "Now it becomes our duty and responsibility . . . to translate into our daily lives the truths that we have heard spoken." General conference doesn't stand alone as an isolated event. We have the responsibility to take what's taught and then to incorporate it into our own lives. As President Hinckley says, to try a little harder to be a little better.

MM: It's wonderful to do that for ourselves. We certainly need to note that for the body of the Church there are those who are called and have priesthood keys. Certain ordinances belong to the priesthood from which flow certain results, and we need to be very cautious and very careful. That was the admonition earlier about listening to false prophets. The Lord understood that.

Early in the Church's history in 1831 in Kirtland, many people were prophesying, saying, lo here and lo there and who's right and who's not right. The Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants makes very clear who is to speak for the Church, and it is the prophet who holds all the keys. We call this section the law of revelation: "And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; and this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me" (D&C 43:5).

That's exactly what he said on the Mount of Olives to his disciples: in the last days will come deceit.

WHY IS PRESIDENT HINCKLEY A PROPHET?

CR: About fifteen years before he was sustained as president of the Church and our prophet. President Hinckley said that the man who becomes the president of the church is "schooled and disciplined in the duties of his office. . . . It is a long course of preparation." In that process, the Lord trains him and disciplines him in a natural process that God directs. He moves through the Quorum of the Twelve to become the senior apostle who, on the death of the president, becomes the president of the Church. "There is no campaigning. [Isn't that a relief!] There is only the quiet and simple operation of a divine plan which provides inspired and tested leadership." The Lord is at the helm of this work. The president of the Church is an instrument in his hands to carry forward this work and to strengthen his kingdom. That's why President Hinckley is our prophet today.

MM: Joseph F. Smith said this: "The moment that individuals look to any other source, that moment they throw themselves open to the seductive influences of Satan, and render themselves liable to become servants of the devil." I'm not interested in becoming a servant of the devil.

In the short time we've had, we've tried to answer the sweet questions that my nephew asked: Why do we have prophets? What is prophecy and why is it important? What do prophets do? Why do we need prophets today? and What difference does it make that we have a living prophet?

CR: We conclude this session by bearing testimony. When I first came to Utah in late 1969, I was not a member of the Church. President David O. McKay passed away early on a Sunday morning in January 1970. One of the women with whom I was living came to me and said, "Our prophet died this morning." Although I didn't really comprehend in fullness what that meant, I sensed it was an important moment in history. I remember running home from a class to watch the televised funeral of President McKay. I had an unquestioning sense that he was a prophet. Since that time, I have studied the prophets. I am now a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I bear solemn witness that the Lord leads this Church through his living prophets. It's one of the things that distinguishes us from any other church. That this is true, that Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet whom the Lord has anointed and called to lead us in this day, is my testimony.

MM: We all in some points of our lives become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Carolyn spoke as a convert; I speak as a fourth-generation Mormon on my father's side. I, too, with Carolyn, bear solemn witness and testify that Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet of the living God. And Amos, the herder and ancient prophet said, "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). I bear you my witness that he does that today. I bear you my witness in the words of Doctrine and Covenants 1:38, "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same." That we will have the wisdom and the courage in some very difficult times to stay strong, to hold to the iron rod, and to listen to our prophets is my hope and my wish and my prayer for each of us.

NOTES

"We Listen to a Prophet's Voice, Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 22.

Gordon B. Hinckley, "'Remember . . . Thy Church, O Lord," Ensign, May 1996, 83.

Gordon B. Hinckley, "What Are People Asking about Us?" Ensign, November 1998, 70.

Anthony W. Ivins, Conference Report, October 1925, 20. Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-51), 5:257.

Gordon B. Hinckley, "Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service," Ensign, November 1997, 49.

Back to [Women's Conference Transcripts](#)

The Lord said, "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). We know that the world will continue to change and that the Lord will never change. The way that the Lord will help us to be able to return to live with him again is through the commandments and principles of the gospel. The only way that we can truly be happy and return to live with God is by listening to the prophets of the church. On the church's website on the topic of prophets it teaches, "As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are blessed to be led by living