

LATTER-DAY PROPHETS

1. JOSEPH SMITH: 1830-1844

Golden Plates

Joseph Smith was the first prophet of the restored church. When he was 14 years old he prayed to ask which church he should join, and he had a marvelous visitation from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, telling him not to join any of the churches because none of them were completely right in their teachings. Later he learned, from the Angel Moroni, that he had a great work to do with a book of gold plates. That great work was translating The Book of Mormon between 1827-1829. He translated the Book of Mormon in 60 working days. He organized the Church in 1830. He restored the Priesthood and gospel in its fullness.

"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. That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God."

Sing: The Golden Plates, 86

2. BRIGHAM YOUNG: 1847-1877

Covered Wagon

Brigham Young was the second prophet of the church. Although Brigham Young went to school only eleven and a half days in his whole life, he did learn to read. In fact, he became one of the most intelligent and well-read men of his day. He learned mostly from the things around him—his home, the forest, and the animals. He learned to make bread, wash dishes, milk cows, and make butter. He said that he could "beat most women in housekeeping." Brigham Young became a powerful leader of the church. He led the pioneers on their trek west here to Utah. He once said, "I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith." He always spoke for truth and righteousness and some people gave him a title of the "Lion of the Lord."

"It matters not whether you or I feel like praying; when the time comes to pray, pray. If we do not feel like it, we should pray till we do."

Sing: Little Pioneer Children, 216

3. JOHN TAYLOR: 1880-1887

Pocket watch

John Taylor was with the Prophet Joseph Smith in Carthage Jail when the mobs came. He tried to knock down the mob's guns with a cane. He was shot several times. One bullet struck him and he started falling out of the window of the jail cell and then another bullet hit him but his pocket watch stopped the bullet from entering his chest. In fact, the force of that bullet forced him back into the

room preventing him from falling out the window. He lived to be the 3rd president of the church. The Primary organization was started when John Taylor was president of the church. He was known as “Champion of liberty and Defender of Faith” because he strongly supported the Church and its leaders during times of trouble.

“We are not alone! God is with us, and He will continue with us from this time henceforth and forever.”

Sing: Our Primary Colors, 258

4. WILFORD WOODRUFF 1889-1898

Moroni Statue

Wilford had many accidents in his life. When he was three years old, he fell into a kettle of boiling water and almost died. It was 9 months before he was well again. Another time he was severely hurt when he fell from the top of the barn to the floor, right on his face. By the time he was 20 years old, Wilford had broken his leg in a fall from a carriage, had been kicked in the stomach by an ox, had been buried alive when a hay wagon overturned on top of him, and had narrowly escaped when a horse pulling a wagon he was in bolted down a hill. Once he might have died when caught in a blizzard, but he was saved by a neighbor. Another time he fell fifteen feet from a tree limb and landed flat on his back. Other times he nearly drowned in thirty feet of water, split open the instep of his left foot when chopping wood with an ax, and was bitten by a dog that had rabies. When Wilford was 17, he was thrown from a horse and broke both ankles.

As an adult, he had yet more accidents. Twice he fell from the top of a mill wheel but escaped being crushed to death. Twice he was dragged by runaway horses, and once a gun aimed at his chest misfired. One day a falling tree hit him in the chest, breaking his breastbone and 3 ribs and badly bruising his left thigh, hip and arm.

Heavenly Father had plans for Wilford Woodruff's life. He was baptized on a cold day in water that was mixed with ice and snow! He was a great missionary. He baptized 1,800 people in England. He kept in touch with every one of these people, writing each one a letter at least once a year! (that's 5 letters every day)

He was baptized two days after meeting and hearing the testimonies of two missionaries. Because he was humble and willing to serve, he was called “Wilford the Faithful.”

He dedicated the Salt Lake Temple in 1893.

“We are expecting to live together forever after death. I think we all as parents and children ought to take all the pains we can to make each other happy as long as we live that we may have nothing to regret.”

Sing: Hinges, 277 or The Lord Gave Me a Temple, 153 (I think Wilford Woodruff must have been so thankful for his body, and thankful that he survived all those things!)

5. LORENZO SNOW 1898—1901

Tithing & Rain

When President Wilford Woodruff died, Lorenzo Snow went to the Salt Lake Temple to pray. As he was leaving the Celestial Room, he saw and talked with the Savior, Jesus Christ and was instructed by him. He later told his grand daughter, “I want you to remember that this is the testimony of your grand-father, that he told you with his own lips that he actually saw the Savior, here in the Temple, and talked with Him face-to-face. He was a humble and holy man. He was sustained as president of the church in 1898. At that time the church was in great financial trouble—there wasn't enough money. President Snow traveled many hundreds of miles to meet with the church members and urge them to pay their tithing. **He promised rain if the saints started to pay tithing.** When they did what he asked them to do, the church prospered and was able to pay its debts. It is always important to follow the prophet, and be obedient to what he tells us to do. The prophet tells us what Heavenly Father wants us to know.

“Jesus has commanded us to be perfect even as God, the Father, is perfect. It is our duty to try to be perfect, and it is our duty to improve each day, and look upon our course last week and do things better this week; do things better today than we did them yesterday, and go on and on from one degree of righteousness to another.”

Sing: I Know My Father Lives, 5

6. JOSEPH F. SMITH 1901—1918 (17 yrs)

Hula Girl

Joseph F. Smith’s father was Hyrum (Joseph Smith’s brother). He was named after the Prophet because Hyrum and his brother loved each other so dearly. Until he was six, milk was about the only food he had, because his family was so poor. The lack of more nourishing food made him look very pale. When Joseph was six (6) years old, his father reached down from his horse and picked up the boy to kiss him goodbye. That was the last time Joseph ever saw his father. Hyrum, with the Prophet Joseph, was murdered by a mob at the Carthage Jail.

When Mary Fielding Smith (his mother) and her family were forced to leave their home in Nauvoo, they decided to head west with the other Saints. Even though Joseph was only eight (8) years old, he drove one of the ox teams. The wagon-train master did not want the Smith family to come because they were without a father to do most of the heavy work on the trail, but Mary insisted that they could get along without any help from others. In fact, she said her wagon would get to the Salt Lake Valley first, just to prove they could do it. And they actually did arrive in the Salt Lake Valley first!

When he was only 15 years old, he received a mission call to serve a mission in Hawaii and he loved the people there so much.

When Joseph F. Smith became the Prophet, the First Presidency wrote a letter to encourage families to hold “home evening” activities. He said,

“If the Saints obey this counsel (holding 'family home evening'), we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of

the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them."

Sing: *The Family, 194* or *Family Night, 195*

7. HEBER J. GRANT: 1918-1945

Marbles & Baseball

Heber's father died when he was only nine (9) days old. Heber grew up very close to his mother. Heber was very good at marbles and was constantly winning. His favorite competitor was Injun Charlie, an Indian boy adopted by a neighbor. Heber and Injun Charlie played with the other boys, but they were so good that when they played with each other, a large crowd would often gather to watch them. Heber was also good at business. He used his marble winnings to hire other boys to go home and do his chores for him.

Heber was a very hard worker and determined. When other boys made fun of his clumsy baseball playing, he shined boots at five cents a pair until he had saved a dollar to buy a baseball. He pitched the ball hour after hour on a barn wall. He was called "the laziest boy" in the neighborhood because he spent so much time throwing the ball, but he made the team that won the territory championship. His handwriting was also very poor when he was a schoolboy. However, with practice, he later earned a diploma for the finest penmanship in the Territory of Utah.

He would say, "Keep the commandments of God." He strongly preached and taught about the Word of Wisdom, the law of tithing and to work hard and be careful with your money.

"That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased."

Sing: *Keep the Commandments, 146*

8. GEORGE ALBERT SMITH: 1870-1951

Handshake

George Albert Smith was one of fifteen children and learned to work hard. He loved swimming with the other boys in the Jordan River and also enjoyed herding cows. George's father was called on a mission for the Church when George was thirteen. George went to work at the ZCMI clothing factory, sewing buttons on overalls for two dollars and fifty cents a week. He used this money to help the family while his father was gone.

The Smith family home had clay-like dirt around it, and no grass. Depending on the weather, there was either ankle-deep dust or sticky mud. George and his mother made it a family project to have a lawn before George's father came home from his mission. They planted the grass and soon it was coming up. Then a thunderstorm washed out months of work in one afternoon. The only money available for more grass seed was the extra money George had earned doing small jobs at school during the winter. He had planned to use this money to buy a much-needed new suit. For two days he wrestled with the

decision; then he decided to spend his extra money for more grass seed. This time the grass grew, and the lawn turned out to be a very nice surprise for his father.

George Albert Smith was known for his kindness. He made a promise “not to be an enemy to any living soul.”

“If you will stay on the Lord’s side of the line you will be under his influence and will have no desire to do wrong; but if you cross to the devil’s side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter’s power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the spirit of the Lord.”

Sing: Love One Another, 136 or Kindness Begins with Me, 145

9. DAVID O. MCKAY: 1873-1970

“O” & Missionary Tag

While growing up on his family's farm, David had a dog, a pony, pigeons, rabbits, and a magpie that he taught to talk. He loved to swim, ride horseback, read books, play baseball, dance, sing and serve in the church.

David delivered newspapers between Huntsville and a small town on the other side of the mountain. He would leave early in the morning, ride on his horse all day, and come home in the evening. He even made his deliveries in stormy weather, because he knew his customers were expecting their papers. During the long stretches of horseback riding, he tried not to waste any time. He read books and memorized poems, learning material that he later used in his speeches as a General Authority.

David O. McKay became a schoolteacher and a principal. He taught the church about having family home evening.

He taught the principle that “Every member a missionary.” He was told by his patriarch that he had something more for him in life than playing marbles. (The “O” in the action represents his middle initial and a big marble.)

“Every member a missionary.”

Sing: I Hope They Call Me On a Mission, 169 or Called to Serve, 174

10. JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH: 1876-1972

Blowing a kiss

Joseph Fielding Smith was the son of the prophet Joseph F. Smith. Joseph F. Smith is known for “inviting all to come unto Christ.” He especially loved children.

Young Joseph had a horse named Junie. He insisted that she was a very intelligent animal. It didn’t matter how many times Joseph locked the barn, Junie could always undo the strap on the stall door with her nose and teeth. When she got out, she would turn on the tap water in the yard. She never ran

away; she just waited for the noise to arouse Joseph so he could turn off the water and put her back in the barn.

One day Joseph's father teased him about Junie being smarter than her master. He showed the boy how to buckle the strap around the post and under the crossbar. Then he said to the horse, "Young lady, let's see you get out now." Joseph and his father left the barn and walked across the yard, but before they had reached the house, Junie was at their side. Joseph grinned and said, "Father, now who's smarter?"

One day Joseph was waiting in the parlor for a special blessing from his father when he saw his mother getting ready to leave with his father and his baby sister. Young Joseph was used to his father's leaving, but his mother had usually not gone also. They were going to Hawaii, a long way from home, and Joseph was afraid he would never see them again. He was eight years old and had just been baptized, so he felt he must be brave and not cry, but he could not help himself. Tears were in his parents' eyes, too. Joseph stayed with his older brothers and sisters while his parents were away. He was very happy when they returned two and a half years later, bringing a new baby brother with them.

"The Lord bless you and keep you, which most assuredly will be so as you learn his laws and live in harmony with them. Be true to every trust. Honor thy father and thy mother. Dwell together in love and conformity. Be modest in your dress. Overcome the world, and do not be led astray by the fashions and practices of those whose interests are centered upon the things of this world" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, 1314).

Sing: *Jesus Said Love Everyone*, 61

11. HAROLD B. LEE: 1899-1973

Piano

He loved playing the piano and was very good at it.

Harold B. Lee was born in Idaho and lived on a farm. His mother was a very good seamstress and they never had store bought clothes because she always made everything. When Harold was four years old and his brother Perry was six, she made them suits trimmed with lace and ruffles. As soon as the boys were out of sight of their parents, they would tuck the lace and ruffles under so their friends would not make fun of them.

Harold had long curly hair as a child, and his mother enjoyed combing it into ringlets that hung below his shoulders. This embarrassed him and caused other children to tease him and laugh at him. Finally, one day he took the scissors and chopped off the curls. His mother cried while his father finished cutting the hair to even it up.

One day Harold was standing in front of an open door watching a heavy storm. The lightning and thunder seemed to be very close. Suddenly his mother gave him a push that knocked him to the floor. At the same instant a bolt of lightning flashed down the chimney, across the room, and out the open doorway. Had Harold still been standing there, the lightning might have killed him.

"Take time for family home evening. Draw your children around about you. Teach them, guide them, and guard them. There was never a time when we needed so much the strength and the solidarity of the home" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 130; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 98).

Sing: Hum Your Favorite Hymn, 152

12. SPENCER W. KIMBALL: 1895-1985

Cow

Spencer lived on a farm and had to work hard to help take care of it. In the second grade Spencer would usually spend his lunch hour running the three blocks from school to home. He would water the cows and horses, feed the pigs, eat his lunch, and then run back to school without being late. One day he went home in the middle of the morning and started the chores. He had goofed. It was not noon, but recess time!

Spencer was a giggler, and many times his teacher had to put him on the dunce seat to settle him down. One day he and a girl across the room, Agnes, broke into giggles and could not stop. The teacher moved Spencer over to sit by Agnes, but this made them giggle even more. Finally Spencer had to sit by the teacher's desk in front of the room. He became serious very quickly.

The children had to work long hours on the farm and sometimes Spencer fell asleep at the supper table. To lessen the boredom of tedious work, he would memorize the ABCs, the times tables, or the Articles of Faith. While milking the cow, he would squirt milk in the mouth of the cat, or memorize word-perfect the Ten Commandments to the beat of the milk squirting in the bucket.

"We do not go to Sabbath meetings to be entertained or even solely to be instructed. We go to worship the Lord. If the service is a failure to you, you must have failed. No one can worship for you; you must do your own waiting upon the Lord."

Sing: The Fourth Article of Faith, 124

13. EZRA TAFT BENSON: 1899-1994

Scout

When Ezra was born, the doctor did not think he would live. The doctor took care of Ezra's mother while both grandmothers dipped Ezra in cold water, then in hot water, then back into cold water and so forth until he began to breathe.

At the age of five, Ezra could drive a team of horses. At age seven he thinned sugar beets, herded cattle, tended chickens, hunted eggs outside the hen house, dug potatoes, and milked cows. There were no machines or electricity to help him with these chores.

Ezra was the Scoutmaster when he was a late teenager. He promised his Scout troop a hike to Bear Lake if they worked hard to win the regional choir contest. The boys worked hard and won! One of the Scouts wanted all of them to have short hair so they would not need combs or brushes on their outing. The town barber joked with Ezra. He offered free haircuts to the whole troop if Ezra would let

him shave his head. So, one bald Scoutmaster took the troop to Bear Lake to fish, camp, and swim! Ezra stayed active in Scouting his whole life.

Ezra Taft Benson counseled the Saints to read the Book of Mormon. This was one of the main messages of his presidency.

"The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to 'sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] elect' (Moses 7:62). This sacred volume of scripture needs to become more central in our preaching, our teaching, and our missionary work. ... Indeed, I have a vision of flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 35; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 46).

"Let us continually reread the Book of Mormon so that we might more fully come to Christ, be committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in Him" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 104; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 85).

Sing: *Book of Mormon Stories*, 118

14. HOWARD W. HUNTER: 1907-1995

Musical Instruments

When Howard was a boy, his family lived in a small home with just one bedroom, where his parents slept. He and his sister Dorothy slept on the front porch, which had canvas screens to keep out the snow in the winter and the sun in the summer.

Howard's mother was active in the Boise Branch. His father was not a member of the Church, but he supported his wife and children in their church activities. When Howard turned eight years old, he wanted to be baptized, but his father explained that he wanted him to wait until he grew up so he could decide for himself which church to join. When Howard turned twelve, he begged his father to let him be baptized so he could become a deacon and pass the sacrament. Finally, a few months after Howard's twelfth birthday, his father agreed to let him and his sister Dorothy get baptized. They were baptized in a big public swimming pool, since the Church had no baptismal font in Boise at that time.

Howard taught himself to play many instruments. When he was seventeen, he organized a band and they played at dances and other social events. After he graduated from high school, he and his band got a job playing on a cruise ship that was sailing across the Pacific Ocean. They played music on the ship for dinners and dances and even provided background music for the silent movies shown in the ship's theater. When Howard returned home ten weeks later, his father surprised him with the news that he had been baptized while Howard was on the cruise!

President Hunter served as the prophet for just 9 months, the shortest time of any prophet. But he was gentle and kind and taught that everyone should treat each other better with kindness, patience, courtesy and forgiveness.

"I invite all members of the Church to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion he displayed. I pray that we

will treat each other with more kindness, more patience, more courtesy and forgiveness" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 7).

Sing: I'm Trying to Be like Jesus, 78

15. GORDON B. HINCKLEY: 1910-2008

6 B's

Gordon had lots of earaches, allergies, asthma, and hay fever as a child. He was so sickly as a child, that the doctor told his parents that he needed some fresh, clean, country air before he could get better. So his parents bought five acres of farmland by Millcreek Canyon and built a summer home there.

Gordon and his little brother Sherman were best of friends. But they were together so much that they started to fight over everything. One day their father brought home boxing gloves for them and told them to "get it resolved once and for all." They did. And they have remained good friends ever since!

Gordon B. Hinckley was the church leader for almost thirteen years. He had a fun sense of humor. He taught us the 6 B's: be grateful, be smart, be clean, be true, be humble and be prayerful. One of the greatest things President Hinckley did as the prophet was building temples. There were only 47 temples when he became the prophet. While he was prophet, he dedicated 65 new temples.

"We have nothing to fear. God is at the helm. He will overrule for the good of this work. He will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 9395; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 7071).

Sing: I Love To See the Temple, 95

16. THOMAS S. MONSON: 1927-

Heart

When Thomas was a boy, his friends and family called him Tom or Tommy. Tom always thought about others more than he thought about himself. Unwilling to see the family of one of his childhood friends eat cereal (moistened with hot water rather than milk) for a Christmas dinner, he handed over his two prize rabbits, saying with a lump in his throat, "It isn't turkey, but they will make you a good Christmas dinner." He has a big heart and has always taught to serve others.

When Tommy was 10, he got a fancy new train set for Christmas. His mom also bought a train set for a neighbor boy, who was too poor to get any presents for Christmas. The neighbor's train set wasn't as nice as Tom's new set. But when Tommy saw it, he noticed that the other train set had a tanker car that his set didn't have. So he begged his mother for it and she finally let him have it. Then they walked over together to give the neighbor his gift. When the boy saw what it was, he was so grateful and so excited, that Tom started feeling guilty for keeping one of the cars. He ran home and grabbed the tanker and also a car from his own fancier train set and then ran back and told the boy they had forgotten to give him two of the cars. He felt so wonderful after sharing that gift, which he never forgot that day.

When Tom was only 12 years old, he was swimming in the Provo River by his home. All of the sudden he saw a crowd of people yelling “Save her! Save her!” He looked and saw a girl who was being sucked into a whirlpool and was drowning. Even though it was dangerous for him as well, Tom swam to her and saved her life.

“Let us not find ourselves as indecisive as is Alice in Lewis Carroll's classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. You will remember that she comes to a crossroads with two paths before her, each stretching onward but in opposite directions. She is confronted by the Cheshire cat, of whom Alice asks, “Which path shall I follow?”

The cat answers, “That depends where you want to go. If you do not know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take.”⁷

Unlike Alice, we all know where we want to go, and it *does* matter which way we go, for by choosing our path, we choose our destination.”

October 2010 General Conference

Sing: Give, Said the Little Stream, 236