

Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion

Conference Center Little Theater – Devotional

August 3, 2018



* Karl Anderson, President M. Russell Ballard, Daniel Adams, Frances & Steve Orton go over details before the devotional * Frances Orton giving instructions for service project * Steve giving introductions * Karl Anderson speaks to the Smith Family



The Wolfgramm family (Hyrum – Martha Ann Family Line) from Redlands, California have been working for over 10 years to create music that will bring the spirit of love and family to its listeners



Brad Wilcox, President M. Russell Ballard, Karl Anderson, Frances & Steve Orton listen to the Wolfgramm family * Brad Wilcox and President M. Russell Ballard enjoying a moment during the meeting



Brad Wilcox speaking to the family * President M. Russell Ballard addresses the group

Frances Orton: Okay, I'll try to make this fast. We have some announcements and then we'll get to our program.

We want to remind everyone to turn off your cell phones. This is a good time to do that. Also, parents, if your children need to go out, we want to encourage you to stay with them, and not have a lot of running around. It echoes around in here, so we need to have you keep that under control.

The next announcement has to do with This Is the Place Heritage Park tomorrow. Now this is really important because we're fitting an awful lot into one day. And we're starting our service project right at 8 o'clock. It is an amazing thing. They've got tents set up, everything is ready to go, but we need you there and ready to go. Do not park up by the gift shop. The park has asked us not to have you park on the brick pavilion area by the gift shop. They will have signs up. Park in the parking lot. We're going to be the first group there so you'll have plenty of parking. But it would be nice to follow their signs.

Walk around the gift shop and go to the Green Eagle Gate. That's where you're going to enter to the Pioneer Pavilion which is just to the left through that gate. You will see us, you'll see where everything is set up.

If you are not going to use your wristbands for the park tomorrow we're asking you to turn them back in. We are charged for each wristband.

Also, Sleep In Heavenly Peace does need to have 30 adults to meet at 8:30 am. We did have a list many of you sign up on. This group will be going to an apartment complex to put together 40 bunk beds for the refugees while the rest of us are building additional bunk beds. Does that cover it?

We will have our opening song number 308, "Love One Another," and we want to thank the people who are helping us with the music, Elizabeth Nixon and Gwen Smith. After that our opening prayer will be by Rhonda Thompson.

Steven Orton: Thank you. There's still a lost item here. (*Chuckles*) And somebody's notebook.

Tomorrow evening we'll have a fireside or a devotional. And those who are not in the reunion, and that are family, please invite them to join us. We'd love to have a big group at that fireside.

Since last night a lot of people have been saying, "Wow, Steve, you're short and bizarre." But I say just wait till you find out how much money I make, then you'll say, "Wow, you're short, bizarre, and poor." (*Chuckles*) But you know, for the meal, I wanted pizza because pizza is amazing. You buy a round pizza, get it in a square box, and cut it in triangles. And it fills the five quadrants of the food triangle pyramid. But then you know, another option was chicken potpie, and I thought that would be good

because you take the carrots, potatoes, and onions and you cut them into squares. And if you have them in good cubes...they make the square roots of pie. (*Chuckles*) In a round-about way. (*Chuckles*)

But we had to go with the meal that would go with our budget. And if you gave me a nickel, for every time that we went through the spreadsheet on the details, we have \$16.13. (*Chuckles*)

Anyway, I hope you didn't write any of that down because when I was born and my parents raised me, my mom said my first word was "quote." So I'm going to make my last word "unquote" and I'll be protected. (*Chuckles*)

We're really excited about having with us President Ballard. And it's just an honor to have him with us, and being able to be here.

We have on our program, first will be speaking on Lucy Mack Smith and her legacy is Karl Ricks Anderson who is a historian that has a specialty of Kirtland, Ohio. He's been nicknamed "Mr. Kirtland." He's authored a number of books and articles and Karl has served on the Joseph Smith Association, Joseph Smith, Sr., Lucy Mack Smith Foundation and the Family Association and organization, and committee and group for 25 years.

We actually have like four different forms of groups. (*Chuckles*) It's pretty neat. But he will be speaking to us. And then after he speaks to us, Brad Wilcox will be speaking to us. And what an honor to have him here. He grew up in Provo. And that is the place to live on 3700 North by the round-about. (*Chuckles*)

But he also spent a few childhood years in Ethiopia. So he can talk to you about -- I don't know if he'll talk about that, but I think that's fascinating. He served a mission in Chile and then he went back to Chile and served as a mission president in Santiago, Chile. He's just a wonderful guy. He's a professor at Brigham Young University and has served on the Sunday School General Board for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His favorite snack is peanut M&M's. So if you like what he says, send me almond M&M's, and if you mistakenly send peanut M&M's, I'll see that he gets those...maybe. (*Chuckles*) So Karl.

Karl Ricks Anderson: I was going to try and tell a joke but I don't dare. (*Chuckles*) It's wonderful to be here tonight with all of you of the Smith family, to look at our heritage. I have loved the Smith's from when I was very small.

My father had a good library, a good Church book library. And one of my favorite books was *The History of Joseph Smith* by Lucy Mack Smith. And I remember opening it, and reading some of the stories of Lucy Mack Smith, and especially of Joseph Smith. And I developed a great love for Lucy Mack Smith. I believe that she is one of the greatest

women in religious history. And she certainly stands alongside the mothers of prophets from the beginning to today.

In fact, Brigham Young made a statement about the Smith family, that as the Lord's eye had been on the Smith family from the beginning, and that Joseph Smith had been foreordained in our premortal life to become the prophet of our last dispensation.

Well, if Joseph Smith was foreordained to be the prophet of the last dispensation, then I believe that Lucy Mack Smith was also chosen at that time to be his mother because I think her mission in life was to guide and raise Joseph Smith and assist him in becoming the prophet of this last dispensation as well as raising eight other children into maturity who always loved Joseph, who supported him, and who believed his story from the very beginning. And I think Lucy Mack Smith has to receive our thanks and a tribute for that.

In fact, as I've prepared or tried to prepare for tonight, it seems to me that the Lord had Lucy Mack Smith -- He chose her -- and He had her walk the same path that Joseph Smith walked. And it is, to me, very evident. And I'd like to kind of start with Lucy Mack Smith shortly after her marriage. She had tuberculosis. Apparently, two percent of the population in the country died from tuberculosis. She had two sisters who died from tuberculosis. And she got so sick that the doctors and also Joseph Smith, Sr., gave up on her.

The day that they gave up on her, she describes how that night, she spent going back and forth to heaven and earth. And she sobbed, she cried, and she pled with the Lord. In fact, let me read to you her words as she was about to pass away.

She said, "I looked to the Lord, I begged, I pled that He would spare my life, that I might bring up my children and comfort the heart of my husband." And then she made a covenant with the Lord. And she said, "I made a covenant with God that if He would let me live, I would endeavor to get that religion that would enable me to serve Him right, whether it was in the Bible, or wherever it might be found, even if it was to be obtained from heaven by prayer and faith."

After she made that covenant she immediately improved. In fact, she told Joseph Smith, Sr., to go get her clothes. She was ready to get out of bed. (*Chuckles*) That sounds like Lucy Mack Smith doesn't it? But she never forgot that covenant. And so, immediately she returned to reading the Bible. She visited from church to church, minister to minister and trying to find the truth. And she finally determined that she wasn't able to find it, but she had read in the Bible where baptism was necessary. And so, she sought out a minister who would baptize her without requiring her to become part of the congregation, and attend the church because she didn't find any religion.

Well, she was concerned about Joseph Smith, Sr. She was doing her best. And out of that concern of Joseph Smith, Sr., tried to help him to become a seeker. Then she decided to do something that her son Joseph, Jr., would one day do. She sought out a

grove, went and prayed. And the Lord gave her a dream in which the ending of that dream assured her that Joseph Smith, Sr., would one day be strong.

And then, at this point, after she did that, she wanted, after she prayed -- and I've got to just pay tribute here to one of our committee members, David -- where are you, David Adams? David has written a beautiful summary of that prayer going into the grove. It's posted on our website. Well, it's actually a link from our website to a blog that David has. And before I finish we'll explain that that will become part of our web page.

And while I'm at it, David, you wouldn't be what you are without a Mother Smith. I'd like to pay tribute to Vivian Adams. She's not with us tonight, she's unable to because of health. But if ever there was a mother in the mold I think of Lucy Mack, I think your mother is. And Dan as well, and Julie Maddox, those three are on our committee. And they've been trained well haven't you? *(Chuckles)* And you've been told what to do, right? *(Chuckles)*

But, at any rate, Joseph Smith now comes along. And Lucy Mack, having walked that path, and found that having made that covenant with God, is now prepared to guide Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith essentially walked that same path. I think that the Lord required her to walk it in order for him to be able to be guided down that path.

And of course, we all know that he goes into the grove at age 14, he did what Lucy Mack did. He went to the various churches, he didn't find the truth. He heard from a minister, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." So, what does he do? Exactly what his mother did. And no doubt the family was familiar with that prayer and Lucy I'm sure guided him to get his own testimony.

And so, after going into the grove, he's now becoming prepared. And Lucy Mack is guiding him. I can just see that household with Lucy and Joseph, Senior reading the Bible. But I can see Lucy Mack taking time specifically with Joseph.

One of the best examples of that I think is in 1824, the second visit to the Hill Cumorah where he met Moroni. He attempts to get the plates and he pulls them out and lays them to the side momentarily. They disappear. Long story short, the whole family had been expecting him to come home with the plates.

The first year he was told he had to be obedient and keep the commandments. And so they had worked with him, I'm sure all year. And Joseph himself said he thought he was ready. And yet now he has to trudge home without the plates in 1824. His father asked him if he saw the plates and he said, "Yes, I saw them, but I didn't get them." And his father said, *(chuckles)* "Well, if it had been me, I'd have taken them." *(Chuckles)* Can you imagine poor old Joseph, that didn't help any. *(Chuckles)*

And then he explained the angel had told him he had to keep the commandments. So Lucy Mack Smith writes, "From that point we doubled our efforts in prayer for Joseph, that he could escape the temptations of the adversary." Now, if you were Joseph, how

would you like to attend family prayer? (*Chuckles*) Poor old Joseph, every prayer, "Lord, please help Joseph. Please help him not to foul up again. Please help him to keep the commandments." (*Chuckles*) And can you imagine Lucy Mack what she would've been telling him on the side?

And so, because of her guidance, then he finally becomes prepared. And of course, the whole family was working with him as well. But Lucy Mack, bless her heart. Here she is, I'm sure at the forefront.

Lucy Mack endured unbelievable persecution and trials. When you look at her, she birthed 11 children, nine of whom reached the age of maturity. All but four died before she did. Just think, seven children -- she watched seven children die. For most mothers to lose one or two, but she lost seven. And she lost three of her sons and one of her grandsons because of mob action and persecution.

But she was stalwart. She was a constant example. She gave this advice to parents in an 1845 conference in Nauvoo. Brigham Young asked her to come and speak. And listen to this sage advice that she gave. She introduced herself and then said, "Her children were raised in the fear and love of God." And I think she put some of that fear (*chuckles*) in some of those children. "And never was there a more obedient family." And I think it was because she disciplined them.

One instance in Buffalo, she was getting on a boat and Porter Rockwell ran off the boat onto shore before the boat was ready to launch. And Porter Rockwell's mother came to her and said, "Please, Lucy, would you please get Porter back because he won't listen to me, but he always listens to you." (*Chuckles*) She told Porter what the story was, and he got on the boat. (*Chuckles*)

And then she said this, she warned parents that they were accountable for their children's conduct. She advised them to give them books and work to keep them from idleness. She warned them all to be full of love, goodness, and kindness and never do in secret what they would not do in the presence of millions. I think that's one of the reasons that all of Joseph's brothers and sisters remained loyal to him.

Sophronia caught typhoid fever. Fifteen percent of the population in the area they lived died. And Sophronia was on her, literally dying. The doctor gave up hope. And they told her that Sophronia was dead. Lucy Mack held Sophronia close to her bosom, and I think, actually willed her to live. Because they said to her, "She's dead, what are you doing, she's dead." She would not give up. And all of the brothers and sisters knew it. And Sophronia then came back to life. That's the kind of a mother she was.

She was outspoken. There isn't any question about that. She was on a ship going to Detroit on Lake Erie and she -- well, this is what happened on New York on the canal. They would shout to her something to egg her on like, "Are you sure the Book of Mormon is true?" And on one account said that "That book was brought forth by the power of God and translated by the gift of the Holy Ghost. If I could make my voice

sound as loud as a trump of Michael the Archangel, I would declare the truth from land to land and sea to sea."

When they were, some of the group were complaining, she said this, when they told her she shouldn't be so forward about talking about the Book of Mormon, she said, "I'll tell people precisely who I am. If you're ashamed of Christ, you must not expect to be prospered."

On Lake Eerie, Hyrum was there with some of the other brethren. They were going to Detroit so that she could visit her sister-in-law. And they got on the boat, and they held a council because everywhere she went, she was very forward. And didn't care if people liked her or not. And so she wrote that they held a council and they -- everyone decided that they should not talk about religion. *(Chuckles)*

Now, we don't know what went on right after that, but we do know that Hyrum stood up and said, "Well, I think we'd better rethink it. Let's let Mother Smith say what she wants, and then the elders can get her out of it." *(Chuckles)* But that was Lucy Mack Smith. She was that way with the Lord.

She had a deep faith in the priesthood and in the Lord. And I think it came from that covenant she made and saw it was realized. And in Kirtland, she stepped on an object on the stairs in their home, and she fell down a whole flight of stairs. She became blind. And so she called the elders in, and in true Lucy Mack Smith style, this is what she wrote:

"I requested them to pray to the Lord that I might be able to see." Well, you'd expect that, right? But then she put an added piece on, "So as to be able to read without even wearing spectacles." *(Chuckles)* So she didn't want to just say -- *(chuckles)* and she said in writing, "now I'm almost 70 years old and I've never put on spectacles in my life." *(Chuckles)* And immediately was healed.

Well, there are dozens and dozens of stories that we could go into. One that I particularly like from Kirtland in the School of the Prophets in the Whitney Store, on the opening day they performed an ordinance of washing of feet which was a sacred ordinance in that room.

The spirit was so strong that they decided to invite the women to come in with them. So they sent a messenger for Lucy Mack. And when the messenger got to the house, she said, "I'm sorry, but I'm not going to go." Why? Because it was a duty. She said, "I'm making bread and I have to finish that. If you'll wait, I'll go." *(Chuckles)* The messenger said, "If you don't go, you're going to miss probably the best meeting you've ever been in." So reluctantly she said, "Okay." So she left, and left her bread unbaked. *(Chuckles)* But her sense of duty to the family, her sense of duty came first. And then you do other things that you would like to do after.

Well, there are many other stories, I wish we had time to go into them. But we're going to make them available. I'd like to announce that on our family website we're going to be adding a tab for "Resources for Family Home Evening." It doesn't work so well trying to pick up her autobiography and try to pull stories out. We have -- Craig Frogley, and we have David, if David, would you stand. Craig, where are you? There you go. They're going to be putting stories up. Thank you. And they're going to be putting them on the website so that that's a resource for you, to go and read stories like I've just shared. And principles, what can be taught through those stories of Lucy Mack Smith.

This great ancestor of all of us, this great ancestor is an example to us, but our children do not know Lucy Mack Smith. Very few do. They need to know. The Lord wants them to know. Joseph and Lucy Mack would want it. In fact, Lucy Mack, especially would want you to do that because she made a covenant that she would take care of her children, and everyone here fits that category of being her children. And I think on the other side she doesn't feel her work is finished unless she has some instruction, unless she has some influence on your children.

And I love her. I hope that you'll use this resource on the family web page. I want you to know that I love the Smith family. I have had experiences with Joseph and with Hyrum. I know that they are working on the other side. I think the film this morning quoted them just saying that now they put themselves beyond the reach of the mobs. And one of the great stories is Benjamin Johnson, Joseph told him, "If on the other side of the veil," he said, "I can work for you better than if I remained alive."

They're working for us. They're cognizant of us. They want us to follow their example and take these great stories. I know that they are with us, not far from any of us. And I know that they can and will influence us. And I bear that witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Brad Wilcox: I love to listen to the passion that Karl feels when he speaks about the Smith family and when he speaks about Church history. I have seen him enthrall teenagers and young single adults, and adults, and children as he speaks to them in Kirtland, and tells them the same kind of stories he just shared with us, that just fill us with so much motivation to do more, and to be better. Thank you, Karl, it's an honor to be here with you.

It's also an honor to be with Elder Ballard. I'm so grateful that he has taken time to come and be part of this evening. The first time I met him was when I was a young missionary in Chile and he came to divide a stake. The stake was Villa Alemana. And he was a member of the Seventy at the time. I had served in that city trying to get ready for the division of that stake for 11 months.

When I was a mission president and the missionaries came and said, "I've been in my area too long," I'd say, "I don't even want to hear it." (*Chuckles*) I said, "When you've been there 11 months, then you can come and talk to me."

I remember it was such a joy to be a part of that stake division when Elder Ballard came, and to have written in my journal how impressed I was with him, with his teachings, with his love, with his light, and example. And also, I wrote in my journal, "He must be a great dad because he reminds me of my dad." I was reflecting on that as I sat here next to Elder Ballard. So thank you, Elder Ballard for all you've done.

Tonight, I was asked to speak about Joseph Smith, Sr., just as Karl has talked about Lucy Mack Smith. I thought I'd start by sharing a story about my own father. When I was in sixth grade, I loved my parents. Then I got to seventh grade. (*Laughter*) I went to a new school, and I found out it's not cool to like your parents.

I remember walking down the hall in my junior high, and these guys were talking about how mean their parents were, and others were talking about how old-fashioned their parents were. And I thought, "Man, I'd better start hating my parents." If I'm going to fit in at this school, I better start hating my parents. And it was hard because I loved them. But a man's got to do what a man's got to do. (*Laughter*)

And so I hated 'em. The whole way home on the bus I hated 'em. The whole way up my driveway I hated 'em. I sat down in front of TV and I hated 'em. But you just can't hate your parents in front of *The Brady Bunch*. It's impossible. So I turned off the TV, and I went to the field behind my house and that's where I was going to hate my parents and it was going to mean something because I was going to be in the field, and the wind was going to be blowing through my hair, and it was going to be like one of the seminary videos.

I thought, "I'm going to go to the field and that's where I can hate my parents with feeling." Well, between my house and the field was a barbed-wire fence. All my life I had crawled under the barbed-wire fence. But I was in seventh grade, and I decided that now that I was a man, I would go over the barbed-wire fence.

Picture this in your mind. Here is the fence. Here is a wooden post. Here is one leg, and here's the other leg. Now is that coming clear? About that position right there I thought to myself, "Oh, this is about the dumbest thing you've ever done."

And right then, the barbed-wire I was balancing on gave out and I landed on the fence—on the barbed-wire. And it hurt. And the post went through my hand. Now I'm not talking about a good scratch, I'm talking about in this side, and out this side.

Now there I am, I am straddling a barbed-wire fence. I have a post sticking through my hand. And I promise you, I was not thinking, "Oh, I hate my parents." (*Laughter*) "I sure hate my parents." No. What was I thinking? "Mom, Dad!" I was screaming for my parents as loudly as anybody's ever screamed for anyone.

Well, my dad happened to be coming home right then. He heard me screaming, and came down to the fence. He literally had to pull my hand off of that post. He wrapped

my hand in a dishtowel and took me to the emergency room. And not once did I think, "Oh, I can't stand this guy. He doesn't like my hair. He doesn't like my music. He's so old-fashioned, he believes in emergency rooms." (*Laughter*) I was just so grateful that he would take such good care of me at the very moment that I had decided I was going to hate him.

The whole time the doctor stitched my right hand back together, my little dad held my left hand and squeezed it over and over and over and over again. And I will never forget the love that I felt, literally pumped into me.

"I see my mother kneeling with the family each day, I hear the words she whispers as she bows her head to pray. Her plea to the Father quiets all my fears, and I am thankful love is spoken here. Mine is a home where every hour is blessed by the strength of priesthood power" ("Love is Spoken Here," *Children's Songbook*, 190).

The reason I share that story is to remind you that when Joseph Smith was going through a surgery, as a young boy, when he was not able to have any anesthesia, he said, "I just want to be held in the arms of my father." It was his father that he wanted to cling to in that moment when he was hurting. That's the kind of man that Joseph Smith, Sr., was.

Lucy Mack Smith was a strong leader in the family. Joseph Smith, Sr., had the emotional connection with the children. He taught them to work. Do you realize they cleared 6,000 trees off of their farmland? 6,000 trees! Yes, he taught them to work, but it was also Joseph Smith, Sr., who taught them to read. And it was Joseph Smith, Sr., who wrestled with them, and played with them. It was Joseph Smith, Sr., who had the emotional bond with his children. He bonded his family together. No wonder Joseph Smith, Jr., wanted to be held in the arms of his father.

If we go back in time, it was Robert Smith who first came to Massachusetts. His son, Samuel Smith had another son named Samuel Smith who had a son named Asael Smith. It was Asael who moved from Massachusetts to New Hampshire. He stayed aloof from religion because he didn't feel like the religions of the day matched the scriptures. He was given to know that one of his posterity would revolutionize the world of religion.

I wonder how Asael Smith would feel today to know that the Smithsonian Magazine named Joseph Smith, Sr., as the number one most influential American in history in the category of religion. He's listed among the 100 most influential Americans in general, but in the category of religion he's listed as number one. Now isn't it interesting that his grandfather had foreseen that and knew that someone in his posterity would revolutionize religion?

In 1771, Joseph Smith, Sr., went to Vermont. It was there he married Lucy in 1796. Joseph was born December 23rd, 1805. And just as prophesied, he was named for his father. In 2 Nephi 3:15 it was prophesied that Joseph would be named for his father.

Now the thing that makes that interesting isn't that a father gave his name to a son, but that a father did not give his name to the first-born son, or even the second-born son. His father saved that name until Joseph Smith, Jr., was born, and that fulfilled prophecy.

Karl spoke about Lucy and her desire to be God-fearing and religious. If we were to allow Lucy to have a motto it would probably be, "Any religion is better than no religion." But if we were to allow Joseph Smith, Sr. to have a motto, it would've been, "No religion is better than the wrong religion." He, like his father, kept himself aloof from the organized religions of his day.

It did not help when Alvin died, and Lucy arranged for his funeral to be held in the Presbyterian church and the preacher, a Reverend Stockton stood to speak at the funeral and condemned Alvin's soul to hell because he had not been baptized. That didn't go over very well with Joseph Smith, Sr. who just knew in his heart that was not right. That insensitive act didn't endear him to the organized religions of the day, the very religions about which his son would later say, "They had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof."

When Joseph Smith started questioning, one of the things that motivated him to question was this rift in his own family. A mother who wanted deeply to be involved with religion, a father who was staying very aloof. He could see the tension that this was creating. He could see that his own siblings were choosing one side or the other. That was part of the motivation Joseph had to seek the truth for himself.

Because Joseph had parents who were both very strong, but had different opinions, it not only motivated Joseph to seek truth, but it also gave him freedom to seek truth. Had he grown up in a family that was very devout in one particular faith, maybe he wouldn't have questioned as he did. If he'd grown up jumping hoops in the traditional religions of the day, maybe he wouldn't have felt free to explore and search for truth on his own.

It was the unique situation in his home that gave him the motivation and the liberty to seek truth. And because of his search, we are all blessed.

Karl said that Lucy had been prepared. But Joseph Smith, Sr. had also been prepared. From 1811 to 1819 he had received several manifestations and dreams himself. Dreams that were so important, and vivid that Lucy insisted that he record them. And those dreams helped to prepare Joseph Smith, Sr. to believe his son.

We always see portrayals of The First Vision, and we Joseph leaving the grove, and that's when the movie ends. But there really was something that happened next. Joseph went home. He put his arm up on the mantelpiece above the fireplace. His mother could tell that something had happened. She asked what was wrong, and he said, "Never mind, mother, I am well enough off, I have learned for myself." Would he ever have been able to make that statement without a father and mother who were

prepared to believe him? They motivated him and gave him the freedom to be able to find truth for himself, for his family, and for the world? And then they believed him.

I bear testimony that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and I bear testimony that his mother had a profound influence on him. And his father, his playful, cheerful father, who had bonded so much with him emotionally, had an influence on him as well.

I'm grateful for the influence of my own parents in my life and I hope Elder Ballard realizes what a tribute I paid to him as a young missionary when I wrote in my journal, "He reminds me of my dad." And I bear that testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President M. Russell Ballard: I'm going to ask Brother Wilcox to write my next conference address. *(Laughter)* So I can kind of wake up the congregation a little bit.

I want to express on behalf of the family, our deep appreciation for Karl and Joyce Anderson. What this marvelous couple have done for this family, you may never fully appreciate. I know what they have done because much of what has been done, we've done together. I just want to express to you, Karl, how much we love you, and recognize that this foundation, the Joseph Smith Sr., Lucy Mack Smith Foundation would not be here without you. And we thank Joyce for sustaining and supporting you through all these years.

Now I'd also like to -- *(applause)* -- thank you. When we think of Lucy Mack Smith I think we ought to be thinking about Frances. Frances is very gentle, but she is unbelievable. She ought to be the president of every Relief Society in the Church. *(Laughter)* Get a few things done with Frances. *(Applause)* And we appreciate Steve for all that you do in sustaining your wonderful wife. Thanks, the two of you. *(Applause)*

Now, I'd like to tell this part of the story of Chile, while Brother and Sister Wilcox are here because I'm not sure that I've ever shared this with you. But in the process of interviewing, to find a stake president for the new stake, we came till 10 o'clock at night, and I have not found anyone. And I repeated several times with the stake president, "Is there someone else that I haven't seen?" Then I learned that there were three brethren who couldn't come to the interviews for one reason or another. And so I said, "Have them come at 7 o'clock in the morning."

Now, coming to a meeting that hour in the morning where some of these brethren and the way transportation was no small thing. But we did get the word out. And one of the three brethren that came, in the process of interviewing him, I found out he was the only one that had served a mission. And now it's approaching 8 o'clock. The general session is at 10. We have now found a stake president, I called him to be a stake president.

Then I apologize and said, "I'm so sorry that you're here now, and we're out of time. I don't know how we're going to get your stake organized." And he simply said, "Oh, Brother Ballard, that's all right. The Lord told me last night that I would be the stake president." He reached into his pocket, pulled out a little card and said, "Here's my counselors, and here's the basic organization that has come to me through the night." That's the kind of people you labored with, and that was a great learning experience for me.

When you're on the Lord's errand, you have to really trust and rely on His arm, and His blessing to guide you and give you answers to your prayers and help. And sometimes it's pretty desperate, and that was one of those desperate times where I spent a good deal of the night on my knees, seeking guidance and direction.

Now, I would suggest to you after the beautiful talks that we've just had about Lucy Mack Smith, and Joseph Smith, Sr., that all of us ought to take a good look at our own lives today. Because we will face them someday. I'm not so worried about Joseph, Sr., but I want to be sure that Lucy Mack smiles at me. (*Laughter*) I don't want to have her upset with me in any way.

We have been so blessed as a family, to be part of the Smith organization. It really was placed in the hands of the Lord from the very foundations, the creation of the earth, according to Brigham Young.

And so in the veins of all of us here, either by our parents or by adoption into our families as husbands and wives, we are obliged, in my judgment, to constantly look at our own lives, constantly be alert to those things that may need some attention in our lives. We have to be very careful today. Today, there are a lot of voices. I think it's much harder, in many ways, for young people to grow up today than it was when, certainly when I grew up because of all this social media, all of this access to information, all of this capacity for our young people and even older people to be locked onto Facebook and to other technologies that if we're not careful, as a family, we'll find ourselves drifting from those moorings that are ours because we are members of the Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith family.

So I have to caution you a little bit tonight. There are those among the saints that are wolves in sheep clothing. And you have to be alert, you have to be attentive and listening to things of the spirit today to know what you should do, and what you shouldn't do, what you should believe, and what you should not believe.

We're living in a day that has been prophesied in the Book of Mormon, in the Bible, particularly even by the Lord Himself. In the 24th chapter of Matthew I've always felt that when the Savior was on the Mount of Olives, He was probably just sitting hoping to get a moment of fresh air and quiet time. But the disciples found Him. And they asked Him a question: Tell us when will Thee come again, and what are the signs of the end of the world?

Now think about that question and realize that they're asking the son of God, the creator of all things, pertaining to this world, and our Savior and Redeemer, He who has rescued every one of us. Think of all the things that He knows, and all of the things He could've said, and answer that question. And how did He answer it? Beware that no one deceives you, for many shall come in my name and say, Lo, here is Christ, Lo, there. Go not after them.

Then He goes on through that chapter and explains that there will be wars and rumors of wars, and there will be all of the pestilences and the problems of the last days, but he also counseled that those are just the beginnings of sorrows. And we're starting to see some of that now. I think we're living in the last days. I'm not any -- I have no idea when the Second Coming, so don't go home and say you sat in a meeting and President Ballard said when the Second Coming is occurring. I don't know and neither do you, and no one else knows except the Father and the Son.

But we look around and see what's happening to the morals. We look around and integrity, and honesty, and the fundamental principles of decency, and everywhere we look, if we're not careful, we can see things that can pull us off the path that leads us back in safely to the presence of our Father in Heaven, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, I know that Father Smith and Lucy Mack would want me to say to you tonight, that they love you, that you're precious, you're their family. They pray for you. They want the best for us. They want us to have the courage and the strength to make right and wise and honest decisions, living at a time, if you're not careful, there's so much confusion you may not find it, it may not come to you quickly.

But because you have the blood of prophets, seers, and revelators that flow through your veins, you're entitled to inspiration, revelation, and guidance from heaven. May the Lord bless you, my beloved cousins and family members, that we will trust in the Lord. If there's something going on in our lives that isn't what it ought to be, that we would take the occasion of this reunion to interview ourselves, sit down and think about our own lives. And if there's some things we need to correct, that we would make a resolve tonight that we're going to do better. We need to repent, that we would resolve that that's what we want to do.

I'll use an example. Pornography is a tool of the devil. It's evil and it's in everybody's pocket. And we have to be very, very, very careful. Because if anyone gets captured with that, it will dull your sensitivity spiritually. You will not have the same connection to heaven if you are tampering, for example, with pornography.

So what should an apostle say to his family? If any of you are struggling with that, somehow, throw yourself upon the mercy of the Lord. Fill your heart with prayer, and trust, and love for your Heavenly Father, and His beloved son, that if there's something that needs to be better in your life, that you take hold of it beginning tonight.

That's a very wonderful thing to know. To me, one of the most glorious principles in the gospel of Jesus Christ is repentance. Oh, how grateful I am, I'm sure you are too, that the Lord has given us a way to escape when we make a mistake. None of us will go through this life without making some mistakes. But we needn't be hard on ourselves, we just need to trust with all of our strength, that the Lord Jesus Christ will fulfill what He has promised He would do in every one of our individual lives. He simply said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." "Have faith in me." "Repent of your sins." "Come unto me." "Be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost." And basically, "I will lead you home."

May Heavenly Father grant this blessing to us tonight. May we be better tomorrow, may we enjoy helping out, and building the bunks and so forth. I won't be with you, I'm in a meeting with the Quorum of the Twelve for four hours in the morning prior to our starting up again after the July break. But I'll have my heart and prayers with you as you render that service, and through the other activities that you'll participate in.

I ask our Heavenly Father then to bless you with the peace of the Lord, bless you in your hearts and your homes and your families with peace and love and joy and appreciation for one another, and that we may help one another as we move through this process of mortality together. May every righteous desire of our hearts be granted as I leave you my testimony and my witness that Jesus is the Christ, He is the Savior and the Redeemer of this world. He is our best friend, brothers and sisters. Love Him. Oh, how I love Him. Serve Him and His church the best way you can, is my humble prayer, and blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.