Womens Conference 2014

“*Take Time to Prepare*”

Good morning dear Sisters. The theme of our 2014 Women’s Conference is: Take “TIME” to prepare. As your Stake RS Presidency we have done just that in “preparing” this year’s conference for you. Planning actually began as we were cleaning up after the 2013 conference & discussing what would we do next year. All of us felt strongly that it was *“time*” to again discuss preparedness. I can tell you that we have already had some discussions about 2015. Preparedness is not a new topic. As members of the church we have received repeated counsel & training on preparedness in such areas as 72 hr. kits, food storage, & budgeting to name a few. Our emphasis today is on “TIME”, taking T-I-M-E: to be proactive & to follow the counsel we have been given. Making more time is not in our recipe book – the Lord has limited us to 24 hrs/day.

Objectives: To encourage you, our Sisters to prepare for the future. Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley has suggested “that the time has come to get our houses in order…*There is a portent of stormy weather ahead to which we had better give heed: (Conference Report, Oct* ***1998****, 70; or Ensign, Nov. 1998, 53).*

This suggestion was given in 1998, 16 years ago. Have we seen “stormy weather” in those 16 years? Definitely!! Just by living in Oklahoma we understand “stormy weather”. We have either experienced it ourselves or have seen the impact it has had on our nearby neighbors. The following video demonstrates this fact.

\*Joplin tornado video

Disclaimer: Joplin does not stand alone in our neighborhood. Here in our own state we have seen the resultant destruction of tornados in OKC, Moore, & other cities/counties. By focusing on Joplin today I am not disregarding or minimizing the impact to others.

For many of us we have a connection to Joplin. We have family or friends there. Bishop Richins grew up in our stake, we know his family. Our husbands, sons, or maybe even some of our sisters responded to the call to help in the cleanup effort, to be part of the “helping hands” army of Saints.

Here are a few excerpts about their experiences from a July 1, 2011 Dessert News article:

Candles. Granola bars. A lantern. These emergency supplies from the stores of several Latter-day Saint families played a role in facilitating the Joplin Missouri Stake’s organization and action in the initial hours after the May 22 tornado. The stake center had been destroyed, as had other major buildings in the area, and electricity was out in many other parts of the city. But a small group of area, stake, and ward leaders was able to meet together in council, by candlelight and later by lantern light, in the home of Joplin Second Ward bishop Dave Richins to determine what to do in recovery, relief, and rebuilding.

As that council and so many other members in the Joplin Missouri Stake discovered, physical and spiritual preparation both played crucial roles in those efforts.

Physical Preparation:

* The stake & wards had an emergency plan. “Our emergency plan, while there is a lot of detail to it, is quite simple: account, assess, report promptly - account for the people & assess their needs
* “What you really learn is that the Church is not just what takes place in a chapel or classroom on Sunday,” President Jones said. “The real test comes when there are needs and we have to look out for each other.
* preparation not only important at the stake and ward level but also at the family and individual level. Because of the nature of the destruction, many people lost their homes, and others’ homes sustained significant damage. Food storage and other emergency supplies weren’t always preserved. But those whose homes were spared were prepared to share what they had with others.

Spiritual Preparation:

* The Higginsons are quick to point out that physical preparation alone is not enough to get them through this kind of event. They know that obedience to the counsel of prophets and apostles builds another kind of store that natural disasters and other calamities cannot destroy.

“We’ve had hard experiences before, and the gospel is what sustains you through everything,” Sister Higginson said. “So although this is a shock and a trauma … it didn’t change anything. You revert to your gospel roots, your spiritual roots, immediately.”

* Bishop Richins said he has seen this kind of faith over and over again since the disaster. “My testimony has been strengthened by watching members of our ward persevere through all this adversity and think of their family first, and then others, before themselves. They dropped everything to come to the aid of others. When we had service projects, the members with destroyed homes showed up wanting to serve. I had to send some of them home with some other brethren to take care of themselves, and they always went reluctantly.

“That’s just a wonderful example of living Christlike lives,” he added. “These testimonies and this faith give us the hope that allows us to press on.”

* Bishop Hoffman said, “With technology the way it is today, we [tend] to be overconfident or over-reliant on the things that make our lives so much easier,” Bishop Hoffman said. “In this instance [e-mail, texts, and phones were] gone. So we went back to what we’ve been taught since we were little, and that’s the simple fact of having prayer and listening for the answer.

“You recognize very quickly—if you didn’t already—how reliant you are on Heavenly Father for answers, because you need them, and you need them quick. But the answers came. They always did. They always will.”

* On the Sunday following the tornado Elder Jonathan C. Roberts, Area Seventy, attended a joint meeting of the Joplin First and Second Wards, where he saw expressions of affection among the Saints and heard their expressions of testimony.

“People who had lost everything—their homes, their workshops, everything—stood up and said, ‘We’re some of the most blessed people.’ How does that happen?” Elder Roberts asked. “How could anybody in those circumstances have the courage and the backbone to square their shoulders, lift their chins, and say, ‘We’re fine’? Well, it only happens one way. They have a perspective of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“In this case, the 72-hour packs, as important as they were, the food storage, as important as it was, went away because of the calamity,” he continued. “And yet the things that were deep-rooted, the foundational things of priesthood keys, of testimony, stood strong. And as the Saints gathered together, it was spectacular to watch the preparation that came from spiritual roots that had been set deep; that windstorm, tornado, or hurricane weren’t going to take away; and that extend beyond mortality and to eternity.”

Today you have *taken the time* to come to this conference on preparedness. Your reasons are as varied as you are. It may be to learn how to begin your preparation, to bolster what you have, to learn new ideas, or how to care for others. Whatever your reasons it is our hope & prayer that you will learn & apply the concept of T-I-M-E. Classes & displays have been designed to help you in:

* T: temporal
* I: individual
* M: mental
* E: emergency preparedness

I believe there is a direct correlation between the “hastening of the Lord’s work” on the earth & our need to prepare. We need to “hasten” our efforts & head the warnings we have been given.

Our scripture reference is found in D&C 88:119 & is on your folder: “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; & establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.”

In closing, may I quote Sister Marcy Peterson, second counselor in the Joplin Stake Relief Society who said that preparation is important to her because of the peace it brings.

“For me, being prepared means … I don’t need to worry,”. “I know that if I’ve done my part by preparing myself spiritually, having food storage, and being willing to share with neighbors and others, I have a sense that I’m going to be okay—that the Lord will bless me whatever happens.”

Preparation works.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.