

"The Miracle of a Mission" - Jeffrey R. Holland

A little background/disclaimer: This is NOT the official transcript from the talk that Elder Holland gave, but it's very close. I have searched and searched and could not find this talk anywhere on the Internet, not even the Church's website. All I could find was people raving about how powerful and incredible the talk is and that if you could find a copy, that you should read it.

My roommate first introduced this talk to me. While serving on his mission in Hungary, he had just been transferred and was busy moving into his new apartment. As he was unpacking, he found a little stack of papers left on a shelf. It was this talk. He kept it for the remainder of his mission.

We're now at BYU-Idaho and he's my roommate. He showed this to me and it hit me really hard. It's an incredibly powerful talk. After looking for it online I could not find it anywhere. I assumed that if I was looking for it, there were plenty more people who were looking for it also. I took his hard copy, typed it up. And now I'm placing it on the Internet.

Again, I would like to stress that this is not the official transcript. While Elder Holland was giving this talk in the Brazilian MTC, I'm assuming that an Elder wrote it up by hand. I simply typed up what he wrote. I fixed as many of the punctuation and grammatical errors that I could find, but I tried to leave the content alone as best I could. So, here it is:

“The Miracle of a Mission”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Brazil MTC – October 28, 2000

Brothers and Sisters, we feel it an immense privilege. I'm so proud of you. I'm so grateful that you've served. Maybe that's the most important thing I can say to you. Tonight we don't have a lot of time. There are 101 things that I would like to say. I wish we could, you probably don't wish it, but I wish we could stay all night. And I do this humbly, this informally, and as lovingly as I know how to do. In the time that we have I'll hit a couple of highlights and key things that I think you need to remember and hope you will.

More importantly maybe than anything, at least basic than anything else that I would say to you, is my expression and my personal love for you. I'm authorized

to represent President Hinckley, President Monson, and President Faust, the Quorum of the Twelve and all the General Authorities; and I think literally and truly I'm authorized to represent the Lord Himself. I'm called to be His witness, His representative, and to speak by His right and His power, not of our own. Nothing of our own strength or privilege and preparation. We don't have anything else. The only thing that matters, the only real preparation and spirit of authorization happens from Heaven. The same with you. You get that from the same source. But, I think in light of that authorization which sent you into the mission field, I have the same authorization to come to this MTC and to tell you that God loves you, is aware of you, and knows your name, knows your call and your mission field, knows your companion, knows your mission President. He knows the lessons you're going to have and the challenges you're going to face. We do love you for serving.

I'm grateful for the way you look. It's very important that the messenger be worthy of the message. We ask you to look a certain way and act a certain way because of the message. This is more important than anything you've ever done in your life. However, we feel . . . and I'm sure you've been wondering . . . however significant your lives may have been . . . and I'm sure you've done very important things, . . . this is higher and holier and more sacred and more eternal than anything you've ever done. It is by definition the most important thing you can do in the world, in time or eternity. For this reason you are engaged in the saving of the human soul. And that is the highest and holiest work in the universe.

That is the thing that God Himself said was His work and glory. It is the purpose for which the Savior came to the earth and gave His life and was resurrected to open those possibilities and promises of Eternal Life. It is the purpose for which every prophet has lived and every apostle has spoken. It is the purpose for which every missionary since Adam and Eve has gone forth to declare the truth. You join those ranks! You join that brotherhood and sisterhood and it is as I said by definition, by theology, it is the most important thing you can do.

There will be other ways you will do this. There will be other ways you will do the most important thing in the world, not the least of which is to be a parent—that will engage you in the saving of the human soul. More tender because you get to raise that human soul and love it and take it on into eternity, but it will still be the same work in God's eyes and in the records of Heaven and the economy of the Plan of Salvation. This work and parental work and church service for the rest of your lives and temple service will forever bring you into the eternal ranks of the work of angels, the work of the Priesthood, the work of the prophets and apostles, for as long as they have lived. And so forgive us if we are very serious with you about this.

It's kind of "grown-up time." This isn't the seminary council. This isn't being president of the teacher's quorum or the laurel class, important as that is. We send you to the temple, we give you the most important covenants a man or a woman can make on the face of this planet at 19 or 21, and we invite you to come and do the work that God Himself has labored over and toiled over and wept over and pursued since before the beginning of time, since before the foundation of the world. It's fairly serious business and it doesn't mean

depressing and it doesn't mean discouraging. It doesn't mean that you can't be happy. But we are giving . . . as General Authorities, we're giving everything we know to this. For as long as we live we will be bearing testimony of the divinity of the Church, and of the salvation of the Lord and of the Restoration of the gospel and of God's love for His children. Until I cannot move my lips one more time, that is what we will do.

We're asking you to join us in that for two years. We're asking you to carry one leg of the race, one relay of the baton for two years' time, or 18 months, as the case for the sisters, and to join President Hinckley and President Faust and President Monson and President Packer and all the brethren. And again I say, you only have to let your imagination move in the way that Sister Holland has suggested, that you join all the other prophets who have ever lived in doing this. It is a relatively short period of time. It may not seem short to you, but it is short to us who are doing this work for 40 or 45 years. We just thank you. We love you. We are honored and grateful that you have come. If fifteen of us had to do it alone, it would be a very, very hard work. If three members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had to do the work you're doing, it would kill us off sooner than it's going to kill us. So, it is a very personal expression of gratitude that we make. Thank you for serving.

In doing that, I represent your Father, your Dad, your little brothers and your little sisters, your aunts and your uncles, your bishop and everybody who loves you and everybody who prays for you. You're the most prayed for people on the face of the earth. I really believe that. I do not believe, collectively speaking, that there is any body of people, any collective circle of individuals, that are prayed for on the face of the earth more than the LDS missionaries. I don't think that other churches have the organizations we have or the missionary force to pray about and to pray for, and they're not organized enough in their ecclesiastical organization to do the praying if they had the missionaries. I used to think that you were the second, that the President of the Church was first, that he was the most prayed for man on the earth and you were second. But I've repented of that because I've never heard anybody pray for the President of the Church, who did not in the same breath, pray for the missionaries. So, it's you and President Hinckley, neck and neck all the way down the line. And take comfort in that, take great satisfaction in that—I do!

There are days when I really need to know that each and every member prays for the Brethren. Hard days, long days, challenging days, troublesome days when Lucifer is real, when evil is rampant and problems abound and the Church is confronted, or the missionaries struggle, or the mission has a problem, or the people in their homes are having difficulties, or families are being torn apart. There are lots of reasons for us as General Authorities to get heartaches and to shed tears, and we take great consolation in the fact that the members of the Church pray for us.

And I really want to thank you for that, and I want you to know that we return the favor. That every Thursday of our lives, this is beyond our personal prayers, (Sister Holland and I pray for you personally.) That every Thursday of your life and of mine we pray for you in the Temple, and I want you to know that we have a little prayer experience in the temple, as General Authorities, just the First

Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, until the Brethren come in at Conference time, and then it's everyone! Every week we have an experience. I don't need to detail all the sanctity of it to you, but suffice it to say, it includes a prayer at a prayer alter, and it's led by the President of the Church. It's led by Gordon B. Hinckley, and you are prayed for. And on days when it's hard, on days when it's tough, and if you're particularly new, on days when you're homesick, you just know that the most beloved man I know in all this world prays for you because you're our teammates! You're understanding something of what we do, and for that reason we really understand what you do, and we're kind of in it together. Maybe the folks back home do or don't know so much about it. Maybe your little brother or little sister don't really comprehend what a mission is. Really, nobody who hasn't been on a mission understands. But nevertheless, from the President of the Church right down to the newest members anywhere who learns to pray and learns what a missionary is, you have that tremendous support and love and encouragement, and I'm authorized, I think, to speak for all of them, to speak for your family.

Some of you out here are new, and by definition, all of you are within nine weeks in this experience. Don't be discouraged. Now that may be easy to say and hard for you to understand. The culture is new, the language is new, and you have every right and every reason, at least every understandable reason, to be homesick. Everybody's been there, and if it gives you any encouragement, just remember that I did this once too, and that no young man in the history of the world could have been more affected by a mission than I was.

My father was a convert and my mother had not served a mission, as sisters usually didn't then. No one in my family had ever gone on a mission. I didn't know the clothing to buy. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know anything about it. I knew zero about a mission, but I knew that I wanted to go, and I knew that I wanted to serve. As inadequate as I was, as unprepared as I was . . . I didn't look right; I didn't act right; I didn't know anything about it. We didn't have an MTC, and I don't remember people or even remember a sheet telling us what clothing to bring. I don't know, I had a suit my brother handed down to me. You could shave by it! You could hang it up and it glistened, it was so worn and so shiny. I had that suit and a green corduroy suit with matching vest and okra lining. Boy, if you think my Mission President's eyes didn't pop out! What did I know? That's all I owned, and my Mom said that I would probably be okay, and that's what I took.

In two years my life was changed forever and forever and forever. Everything I hold dear, everything I cherish in one way or another, I owe to the experience that converged from my childhood, my lovely parents, and my good home. Converged and passed into my soul on a mission. Everything -- my marriage to Sister Holland, my children, the fact that they have been on missions and all married in the temple and now are raising children to go on missions and be married in the temple, my education, and my chance to have a profession in education, my church assignments—everything that has ever blessed me I owe to the gospel, collectively, broadly, and to my mission specifically.

So don't worry about being homesick. Don't worry about being new. Don't worry about the language. None of that matters. It will not matter. God loves you and

this is the truth and you can do it! Just reach down, pull up your socks, and go to work. This is the time for you to go out. I plead with you. I plead with you, in the case of the Elders, to have a 24-month mission! Not 23, not 22, not 19, not 16, not 14...to have a 24-month mission! Sisters, have an 18-month mission—not 15, not 11, not 6. Start fast. Run hard and to the tape! You can rest later.

I played for a state championship basketball team once, and we weren't supposed to be there, and we weren't supposed to be able to play. We were a rag-tag bunch from a very small school where there was hardly enough guys to put on jerseys. And somehow we made it to the championship game. And I remember the coach saying at half time, when we were behind . . . he came into the locker room and said, "I know you're tired. We don't have a lot of substitutes—we hardly have any. I know you're tired. I know you're giving it everything you've got, but the next 20 minutes is the most important 20 minutes of your high school career. Twenty minutes is all I'm asking and then we'll rest forever! Give me all you've got for 20 more minutes! Let's go out there and do that." And we did, and it worked, and we won. It was great, but matters not at all, matters not one iota. I don't think I ever thought about it much in the forty-plus years since that happened. But in the gospel, I mean if it can matter for a high school ball game or a track meet or a dance review or a symphony recital, if it can matter for things like that, that pass away in the night and dissolve in the air, how much more should that spirit of commitment count in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! We're just asking for that slice.

Most of you had a reasonably comfortable life up to the call, and you can just have the most terrific, relaxed, wonderful life after, but right now we want you to run all the way, every day, every step until this is over. To give the Lord a full 24-month or 18-month mission, for your sake, for the Church's sake, for integrity's sake, for the prophet's sake. I can tell you he's doing it! Ninety-one years old, (he will be ninety-one in June), ninety-one years old and going all day, every day, everywhere, all the time until he drops!

His only council to us, and he's willing to do the same, he says, "Look, you know, you don't work hard enough, you don't go far enough, you don't do enough," (here we all are dying), he says, "Look, I don't have sympathy for you. If you die, you die." And clearly that's his theory. I mean, that's his position. He just said, "Look, what use are we then, what do we do at our level, at our time in life, with our calls...what else is there? We will just give and give and give until we are taken." And we don't want you taken. We don't want you to pass out. We don't want you to ruin your health. We just want two years from you. We just want 18 months from you. So start now. Just don't look back. Just put your face to the sun and put your shoulder into this work, and give it everything you've got and savor every day! Now if anyone wants to go home, talk to me. I will not let you! I will throw my life before the barred door. I have chains in every room. I have skyhooks and cables. I have things you've never seen before. If you think President Palmer's tough on you, you haven't seen anything yet! If you have any feeling about going home, you cannot. You must not. Not for the Church's sake, the Church wouldn't miss you that fast! You cannot go for your sake!

Look at me and listen to me and see the fire in my eyes and the flame in my soul! You cannot ever go home! You've got to know what this means to me, what

it has meant to my life, what it has meant to my family. The first missionary to go—a 180 degree turn for our entire family and its generations—to receive the gospel and go on a mission! I would do anything to keep a missionary in the mission field. I would hang on, I would grab your leg, I would twist your ankle, I would put a full nelson and a judo chop, and whatever it takes. I would make an absolute fool out of myself, which is about what I'm describing, just to have you know how much it matters. And someday, and someday soon, it won't be long; you'll laugh about the homesickness and smile about the necessities of the MTC or the shock of the culture, or the strangeness of the language. Every day and every way it will get better! That doesn't necessarily mean that it will get easier, but it will get better.

This is hard work. It is the hardest work you will ever do. That's why I say this is the most important work you will ever do. I think those two go together. It's hard work, but every day, in every way, it will get better, and you will feel the Spirit of the Lord. You'll know He loves you, and the language will come, and baptisms will come, and you will make new friendships, both with your companions and with investigators and with ward members and branch members and people with whom you serve. And someday, sometime, you will come back, husbands and wives, you will come back and preside over these missions, or you will send your sons or your daughters to serve in the same missions. You will tell them stories of those legends of your life in the mission field.

Plan right now! Plan right now for the stories you will tell your children about your mission. Live right now in every way to look them in the eye and put them on your knee and rock them on your lap and tell them as I am telling you, that you loved every day of your mission. That you worked your head off! That you've never worked so hard in your life. That you were tired and sweaty and dirty and hungry. And you knew how Paul felt. And you knew how Peter felt. And you knew how Mormon felt. And you knew how Moroni felt. And I promise you that your children will remember and never forget it, and they will cherish it and hold it dear for their mission and so the generations go. So life is lived and this dispensation is pursued, and the Kingdom comes, and Christ does arrive whenever that is.

Live now for those generations. Live now for the deacons and beehive girls who will one day have you return and sit up and watch you in Sacrament Meeting, who don't have a blessed idea what a mission is, and have no idea what it means to go to Manaus or Belem or Belo Horizonte or Porto Alegre or wherever. And then you look them in the eye and say that they too can serve. That they've got to go take their turn in the relay race of eternity. They've got to step up and pace out their two years or eighteen months. You live right now in a way that you can pierce their hearts and touch their lives.

Without a big brother or father or an uncle to set an example for me in the mission field, at the very time I was wondering about a mission, I had no particular history or tradition to propel me that way or move me that way. A friend of mine a little older, just the way you have younger friends waiting at home, came back from his mission and testified of the hard work and real growth and problems and troubles and fun and laughter and tears and the whole package, and I was spellbound! I really think that day . . . I was 17 years old,

near enough to start to think about, “Well, am I or aren’t I?”, and I think that day is the day I decided to go on a mission. I started to take the steps towards one. You have such a legacy to give. Already you’re just the newest of the new, you’re the newest team on the squad. Already from day one, you take your place with what is, I guess, the grandest fraternity or sisterhood, or brotherhood and sisterhood, in the Church—that of a missionary. It is the largest collective association of which people are known in this Church. He or she was a missionary! And the expectations are so high, people really believe you to be perfect. They want you to be perfect.

When I was at BYU and had new converts come, and sometimes their feelings were hurt, or sometimes something happened that wasn’t appropriate, and I would talk to them and this precious convert would say, “But she was a returned missionary,” or “He was a returned missionary,” as if to say, “You know, gosh, I thought I was with Moroni. I thought I was with Wilford Woodruff.” They have a right—everybody has a right—the Church has a right to see us that way, collectively, even if that is a tremendous burden to bear, and it is. It’s an overwhelming burden to bear. But the Church has a right, and these kids have a right—your little brothers and your little sisters have a right—to just think you’re perfect—that you’re out there doing something, and they don’t know exactly what. I know that all my life growing up, I heard “tracting”, which is knocking doors, and I thought they were saying “tracking”, like Indians through the woods, and I wondered, “What are the missionaries doing tracking?” But it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter what misconceptions exist, you just have an obligation to let people think you’re perfect. And I do think you’re perfect. I think you’re perfect because you’ve chosen to serve.

I know that some of you are struggling. I could see it in your eyes when I shook your hands. That’s what we do when we shake your hands—we interview you. And thank heavens for this calling—you can do it that fast! I can sit down with President Palmer now and identify the Elders and Sisters that we probably need to talk with a little bit. It’s okay, you’re alright. It’s no problem. But I can tell the ones that are struggling and just know that even then, even with that, we think you’re perfect because everyone struggles.

When President Hinckley stands and talks about his mission, as he did with me when I had a chance to write an article on him for the Ensign when he was made the President of the Church . . . I had the wonderful privilege to write the article on him for the Church magazine. I interviewed him and all he wanted to talk about was his mission, as if nothing else had ever happened! And in a way he’s trying to say what I’m saying—that nothing would have happened if it hadn’t been for that.

He got out on his mission and hated it! I don’t know if he hated it, but he felt troubled by it. He was a little older. He’d finished college. It was the Depression. He didn’t have any money. His mother had just died. And he’d been through school because he didn’t have any money to go on a mission. So he’d go one more year and one more year. So he was a little older—he was 23 or 24 years old when he went on his mission, and he had ambition, and he had things to do, and certainly wanted to save money. And his Dad had sacrificed to send him. He said, “If you go on a mission, your brothers and I will keep you on your mission.” And

his mother, who had died, had saved a little bit of her house money, just a little bit of grocery money, and a little bit of her laundry money, and whatever, and she saved it, only a few dollars, but she saved it and left it for him after she died. And he was so touched by that he went on his mission.

But he got out there and he found what you found. It was hard work, just miserably hard work. And the days were long and sometimes it was cold and sometimes it was hot and the people rejected him. In his day he stood on a little soapbox, and he couldn't . . . and they made fun of him and teased him and pointed and vilified the local Mormon missionaries. It was a nightmare for his first six to eight weeks, about like you would be, and he wrote his Dad and he said, "Dad, I'm coming home. I'm wasting my time and your money, and it's just not paying off, and I'm coming home." His Dad blazed a letter back! And President Hinckley said he had to read it wearing asbestos gloves. His father fired him a one-sentence letter back! "DEAR GORDON, FORGET YOURSELF AND GET TO WORK! LOVE, FATHER." And he said the "love" was sort of figurative in that letter, that is what fathers are supposed to say. He said he went upstairs to his little apartment in Preston, England, and he knelt down and said, "I guess I'm supposed to stay. I guess I'm supposed to be on this mission. So help me. Help me serve. Help me work. Help me learn what I'm supposed to learn." And then he said with tears rolling down his cheeks, the President of the Church, "That is the day when my life changed forever!"

Where would we be today without Gordon B. Hinckley? Well, I can tell you one thing—that Gordon B. Hinckley wouldn't be the President of the Church if he hadn't stayed on his mission. What for you and for me and for the Church and for destiny, what was hanging in the balance that day, that even somebody like President Hinckley, young Gordon Hinckley, wondered whether a mission was worth it or not. Because his Dad and a mission President and a companion and you and me and people who love him, figuratively speaking said, "You'd better stay there. This is a chance of a lifetime. This is the work of eternity. Don't lose it now. Don't blow it now. Give it all you've got." Because of that, we have the President of the Church. We have the 103rd temple to dedicate in six more weeks. We have 60,000 missionaries around the world. We have a destiny and a dispensation in which he stands with Joseph and Brigham and John and Wilford and Lorenzo and Heber and George Albert and David and on and on to this fifteenth successor in an unbroken chair of prophets in this, the greatest dispensation in the history of the world.

Well, look, if President Hinckley can struggle, you can struggle. If President Hinckley can wonder whether it's worth it, you can wonder. You just forget it. Just say it and get on with it. Just write it in your journal and keep moving. Gordon, forget yourself. Go to work! And that's collectively the message that God would give to all of us.

Remember above all, that this is a spiritual work. It's the most important thing you can remember all your life. You cannot have a mission and you will not succeed on this mission and you won't be happy and you won't lose your homesickness and you won't get the language and you won't be acclimatized to the culture until you give over to God and say, "This is Thy work and I'm only the instrument. I'm the pencil, but you've got to do the writing." That is the most

important thing for a missionary to learn ever. Section 50, a verse you all memorize and I hope you remember all your life, "Unto what were ye ordained?" Or in the case of the sisters, unto what were you set apart by somebody who was ordained? "To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter" (D&C 50:13-14). And if it is not taught that way, it is not God's way. If it is not taught that way, it is some other way. And any other way is not of God. You can't do it your own way. Don't even try. That's part of the worry—you don't have to do it, you can't do it, you shouldn't do it. Stop worrying that you have to do this. This is God's work! He will watch you! He will answer your prayers! He has legions of angels and teams of chariots to run to your aid this very hour. He will bless you! This is His work, but you have to do it His way! That's the contract.

I shared with the missionaries in Sao Paulo yesterday the story of Moses leading the children of Israel who had to ask that question saying, "Lord, I'll do this. I'll take on Pharaoh, I'll face the soothsayers, witches and doctors and the serpents, and we'll get blood running in the river, and we'll part the Red Sea, but I can't do it alone. I couldn't even try. I'm the least adequate man alive. I can't even talk. I need a companion to translate for me. I can't do any of this, but we'll do it, parting the Red Sea and crossing the River Jordan and claiming our inheritance. But I have to know that you will go with us. I have to know that you'll be the divine comforter in this missionary service. Otherwise, we can't go. We're not even going to leave Cairo. We're just going to stay here. We're just going to stay here and stack bricks. We can't do it. There is no way that we can fight Pharaoh or fate or sand dunes or water unless the very power of heaven, unless the power of Almighty God, is resting on our shoulders and in our hearts.

That is a legitimate request to make of a missionary. And it is a legitimate answer that God gives saying, "You're on! That's a deal! You don't have to wonder about me. Worry about yourself. Don't worry about me—I can do it!" And He can! And He does! You will succeed in this work. You will succeed at this work because it is God's to do. And all you have to do is say, "Here, use me. Take me. Just point me in the right direction. Where's the tape and I'll head for it? I'll give you all I've got for two years." And that's all a missionary has to do, and technically all a missionary can do. And that's all that God wants. And He'll do the work. And He'll give you the words to say and the language to say it. And the testimony to bear. And the places to go. And the doors to knock on. And the people to inquire of on the street. He'll do all of that if you will pledge to live by the Spirit, and be obedient, and testify by the Holy Ghost, and do the work His way.

Forgive us if we ask so much about obedience. We ask so much about rules. It's because we've been at this for 170 years, just in this dispensation alone. We know what it takes to succeed. We've tried all the other ways. We've seen all the other ways that don't work. We've had all the missionaries who have tried to do it their own way. And after 170 years, trust us that the information is pretty well in, and the documentation is pretty clear, starting with the declaration in the scriptures themselves. That we are called to preach the gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter, and there is no other way and any other way is not of God. If you would just be that comfortable, actually it takes a lot of pressure off. It takes an incredible amount of pressure off of us individually. To just say it really is His work and He'll do it and He can do it and He's always done it and He will

do it! These are His children to save. This is His work. He will do it. But He's got to have an obedient and spiritually hungry missionary!

Do not look tired—this work can be done. That has been the work of all the dispensations since the beginning of time. And that's the request that's being made—accomplish! I love you. I love looking at you. I love seeing you. I know how you feel. I was once one of you and without this understanding once. Somehow, someday, somewhere, some of you will be asked to do this, and by that I don't necessarily just mean the Apostleship, but preside over missions, preside over Stakes, preside over Relief Societies, be parents and raise kids and do that later part to build the kingdom that you're starting to build now.

I've been your age and you haven't been mine, but I do remember what it was like to sit here and have dreams and fears and hopes and wonder, wonder if you were about to do it, wonder if you'd be happy, wonder if you would work hard, wonder if you could succeed. Now, 38 years and one month later I tell you that it was the most important thing that ever happened to me in my life, that it's brought so many blessings that have now become important and now take their place in my life, but which would not have happened, I'm absolutely confident they would not have happened, if it had not been for the privilege of a mission.

I love you. I testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose witness I am called to bear. I've born witness all my life. Now I am a witness and so are you. For these two years we're alike. All day, every day, full-time, full-bore, all we know and all we can do and all we can believe and all we can declare in the name of Christ, salvation of the children of men and the true and living Church. For these two years, and these 18 months, we're alike. We're all witnesses called. Mine goes a little longer, and I have some keys you don't have. I belong to a quorum you don't belong to. But in spirit and in effort, in the good we're trying to do, and in the testimony we're trying to bear, we're the same. Part of your life is part of mine. Maybe that's why I love you so much.

You look like future leaders of the Church, to testify of the divinity of this Church, of this work, and of God's love, of His reality and His appearance to the Prophet Joseph Smith. And if there is anyone in the room who's struggling with a testimony, you have one--mine! I'm giving my life to this. You're giving two years. I'm giving my life! Everything I own, everything I possess, is on the line. I would not come to Sao Paulo to tell you a fairy tale. I wouldn't wear myself into the ground, nor would President Hinckley do the same for something we did not know beyond a shadow of a doubt was God's almighty truth! Give me a little more credit than that! I'm not an absolutely stupid man. This is the truth! And I'm giving everything that I know to give for that declaration.

I had a missionary ask me once if I would give my life for the Church. I said, "Elder, I am giving my life for the Church." I know what he meant. What he meant was, "Would you die for it?" Well, that's the easy part. That's a snap! On some days it looks really appealing. That's the easy part, to die for it. Well, what God needs is people who will live for it. People who will go the distance. People who are in this race we're talking about that will go all the way to the tape. And some may die along the way and that's wonderful, but He needs people who will finish the work. He needs people who will wrap this up. And that's the pledge I

make to you. And that's the pledge He asked. We're in this together.

I wish we could give you all a hug. Sister Holland could hug the sisters, and I could hug the elders, but we don't have time to do that either. But figuratively know that we would. Know that we do. Know that we love you and admire you and live for the day we'll all be together in some big missionary reunion in heaven. And we'll invite Paul over and Peter and Isaiah and Alma. And we'll just have a good time talking about missionary service. It's a great Brotherhood and Sisterhood. And I express my love to you and declare the divinity of this work in the sacred, holy and redeeming name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.



*"forget yourself
and go to work."*

-Bryant S. Hinckley