

What Will You Tell Your Grandchildren?

Larry Richman, Stake Conference, November 15, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers, my question to you today is “What will you tell your grandchildren and great-grandchildren about COVID-19?” Someday in the future, you will tell them about the “year of the coronavirus.”

You’ll tell them about how this virus came out of nowhere with little warning and that it changed life as we knew it. You’ll explain to them that over the course of very few months, the virus spread to most of the world. Countries closed their borders to travelers. Gatherings of people were limited, and people had to wear masks and keep a physical distance from each other.

Stores still had food, but it sold out quickly. Stores sold out of water, and toilet paper, and any type of disinfectant. Restaurants closed, and fast-food places only served at drive-throughs.

You’ll explain to your grandchildren that in March, the First Presidency suspended Sunday meetings and bishops authorized priesthood holders to administer the sacrament in homes.

Missionaries in several parts of the world were reassigned to other countries, or released early and sent home, or told to self-quarantine in their apartments. It caused them to really think and pray and find new, creative ways of doing missionary work—that, by the way, have been remarkably successful.

You’ll explain to your grandkids that schools were closed, reopened, and closed again. That many students began learning at home or in online classes.

You’ll say that many businesses closed and either went out of business or learned to adapt—in many cases with employees working from home. You will explain to our grandchildren that it was hard to stay home with nowhere to go, ... but that it was also a great opportunity for more family time. It was a wonderful experience to get to know our families better and love them. Uninterrupted time together helped us reset our focus—and it strengthened our closeness.

You’ll tell your grandchildren that temples worldwide were closed, suspending ordinances for the living and for the dead. But you’ll explain how members responded to President Nelson’s charge to gather Israel on both sides of the veil by stepping up the pace of indexing and preparing temple names so that when temples reopened for proxy work, ordinances could be performed at an accelerated pace.

You’ll tell them about the suffering that people experienced when loved ones died from the effects of COVID. Others got sick but recovered completely. And others recovered but had lasting damage to their heart or lungs or had a long-term loss of the sense of smell or taste.

You’ll tell them that perhaps the biggest toll was emotional. I hope you’ll explain to your grandchildren about how *you* reached out to others who were anxious or depressed—especially people who lived alone or needed help in some way. In reflection, I hope you’ll realize that it made you a better person. That you thought more about others. That you called other people more often. That you didn’t recoil into your own little world, but that it made you reach out more to others and think about their needs.

That it helped you realize that ministering isn't about visiting people, or even loving people—it's about adopting others into your life.

On top of all the concern about the coronavirus, you'll tell your grandchildren that on March 18, we experienced an earthquake. All it did was knock things off the shelves, but it reminded us that man is nothing compared with the forces of nature. It reminded us that God is in control. That this life is the time to prepare to meet Him. I hope you'll tell your grandchildren that it reminded you to get your affairs in order and to be more serious in achieving your purpose in life.

You'll explain to your grandchildren how grateful you were when Sunday meetings finally resumed. How great it was to see ward members again. And, when some older members weren't there because of health reasons, how you called them to see how they were doing and to tell them you missed them.

And you'll explain to your grandchildren how you had to figure out how to use Zoom for Sunday School class. And some of us still haven't learned how to do that yet.

You'll explain that for quite some time, Primary didn't meet physically, and parents had to recognize that Primary is home-centered and Church -supported. Parents began to understand in a more complete way that parents really do have the primary responsibility to teach the gospel to their children, and that the Church is just there to support. But Primary teachers did reach out and minister to the children in their classes, even when classes weren't being held.

I hope you'll remember to tell your grandchildren how others went to great lengths to help. How medical workers and first responders put their own health at risk to help others. How schoolteachers Zoomed lessons into our homes. How school coaches lead virtual exercise sessions for families. How artists and musicians freely shared messages of hope, although their own careers had been upended. And how neighbors even gave each other spare rolls of toilet paper. Tell them how we experienced a world united in compassion amid suffering and confusion.

You'll also tell your grandchildren about one of the most divisive presidential elections in history—that sometimes pitted neighbor against neighbor or even siblings against each other. But it also reminded us how we need to treat others. It reminded us that our character is manifest by how we behave and treat others—both before and after the election. It reminded us of the importance of not making assumptions but digging in to learn the facts and to think through the eventual outcomes. We are weak when we're divided, but we are strong as a nation, as a church, as a neighborhood, and as a ward when we are united.

We can also explain to our grandchildren that racial tensions rose again, like in the 1960s. It caused us to look inward to see if we harbor any prejudice or bias. We were reminded by our leaders that "God does not love one race more than another" and that "Any of us who has prejudice toward another race needs to repent!"

As we tell our grandchildren about the important lessons we have learned, we recognize that every experience we have—*especially* the difficult ones—can teach us how to be better people.

I hope that we have learned about our vulnerability. We've seen that a virus 1,000 times smaller than a grain of sand can bring the world to its knees. We should be grateful to God for life. We should be

grateful for the generosity of others. I'm grateful for the complete stranger in front of me at the checkout the other day who paid for my drink.

These are some of the precious lessons we have learned this year. I hope we don't go back to "normal." The "new normal" should be something much better. We've learned a lot and I hope we move forward, not backward.

The business world has found more efficient ways to do things. Technology allows people to "work from anywhere." They have accelerated the implementation of things they planned to do someday, but now they are forced to make changes. Let us also move forward and for all the things we've said we would do someday, let's do them NOW.

Please let God guide you to *your* "new normal." Think about the lessons you have learned. God has prepared His Church for this time. We are ready. He implemented *Come, Follow Me*, years before the pandemic so that we would be ready to study at home as a family. He adapted the structure of elders quorums and Relief Societies to work together in unison to provide better ministering care for all members of the ward. Years ago, He provided an online FamilySearch program so that family history work could continue forward from individual homes to build a comprehensive genealogy of mankind. We have technology today that allows us to meet virtually when we can't physically. We are streaming this meeting today into hundreds of homes.

The proclamation on the Restoration states: "We gladly declare that the promised Restoration goes forward through continuing revelation. The earth will never again be the same, as God will 'gather together in one all things in Christ.'"

The world won't be the same. We don't *want* it to be the same. Every year, we need to learn more, experience more, and get better.

At the last general conference, President Nelson said: "The question for each of us...is the same. Are *you* willing to let God prevail in your life? Are *you* willing to let God be the most important influence in your life? Will you allow His words, His commandments, and His covenants to influence what you do each day? Will you allow His voice to take priority over any other? Are you *willing* to let whatever He needs you to do take precedence over every other ambition? Are you *willing* to have your will swallowed up in His? ("[Let God Prevail](#)," October 2020)

Brothers and Sisters, may we let God prevail in our lives. May we follow His commandments and become what He would have us become. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.