

The Fiery Preacher, Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Highlights & Commentary on
The Biography of His Life & Ministry



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Insights shared in this book often draw upon the writings of others. When they do, it is clearly stated where the ideas are coming from. The ideas are also summarized in my own words, and my added commentary is clearly distinguished in separate paragraphs beginning with “Note...” I’ve also selected excerpts from those writings which are particularly meaningful to me, and as such my notes here do not represent book summaries so much as highlights of parts I liked.

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The Bruce R. McConkie Story: Reflections of a Son by Joseph Fielding McConkie – 2003 Book Highlights



FAMILY & YOUTH

Ch. 1: Let This Then Be Our Covenant

Our faith entails that we must come to sound individual understanding of gospel principles.

Prophet to prophet the mantle transfers at death.

His gift was perfect knowledge of gospel principles.

He heard words in his mind attesting validity of the 1st Presidency sure as the Lord to Enos' mind.

Live worthy to be where your ancestors are after death.

Ch. 2: The Hearts of the Fathers

A legacy of ancestors of faith is wealth.

His dad preached so loud you could hear it from home.

He believed his family had kinships which existed before birth.

Ch. 3: The House of Faith

Don't think you win God's favor while opposing him in anything.

Joseph Smith, Woodruff, & his father he called greatest spiritual giants of this dispensation.

Frustrated with ambivalence seen in some church councils.

He nor his father understood uncertainty.

Self-taught the gospel; neither he nor his father had a gospel library growing up, they just had the scriptures; they drank from the fountainhead.

His father told his children that they knew more about God than anyone they would ever meet in the world.

He never had money making talent.

Given the choice between making money and preaching a sermon he and his father would preach a sermon every time.

Note: we must make monetary sacrifices to use our time to spread the gospel, even in time that we could have spent doing a “side hustle”. Do what you wish, but always sacrifice for the gospel message.

Had no care for sports or fashion.

Oscar (his dad) watched Kentucky Derby on TV. Bruce never watched TV. Joseph Fielding Smith

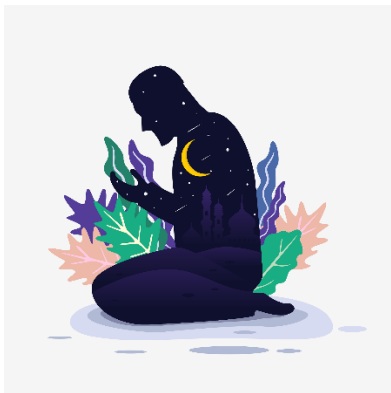
watched boxing Wednesday evenings on TV (as it reports elsewhere in the text).

Bruce & Oscar were lawyers. Oscar had pride in being the best at work and made a full wage. Oscar ran for several public offices, each time the spirit told him the outcome. Oscar was active in politics and government all his life. Oscar loved the constitution like life and liberty itself.

Orson spilled milk and was spanked for it once, he never spilt milk again.

Oscar passed sacrament in overalls and bear foot, it was all he had.

Oscar fasted 3 days until the spirit said fast no more your prayer is answered. And it was, the very hour the spirit told him that, events took place fulfilling his prayer.



Dreams and visions warned Oscar of deaths of close ones.

Oscar said despite all others being asleep in society, it wouldn't affect him.

Those who see must teach those who don't.

Agency is needed to be virtuous, and the constitution allows such.

A Dr. said Oscar should use tea and coffee to help his near-death Typhoid, he said **if it kills him to obey God by not using those things, so be it.**

Of Oscars family, **only those who lived the word of wisdom survived** Typhoid. Later another Dr. told them that if they had any poison in their system they would have died. The Dr. said he was referring to tea, coffee, tobacco, and liquor. Oscar always boiled his drinking water to make it clean.

Oscar often told his children that God ordained and appointed their mother for him, that their union was according to divine plan. While courting, Oscar would meet Vivian by appointment on campus, as they were both very busy with large class loads. Oscar's courtship consisted of walking and talking, they were happy just to be together and didn't need to seek other forms of entertainment. Oscar said his wife and he knew each other before birth and knew what they would do about it after they were born. He said it was as though they had always known each other. She never seemed strange to him. She made him shirts for many years. Oscar said his wife knew all their children before birth, and that she would be their mother. She was ordained to come to this earth to mother special spirits who would influence many and lead in the church and become prophets and prophetesses. Oscar and Vivian claimed to never argue over

anything of importance. They did disagree on things though, because those who don't argue are either overly dominating or overly weak. Oscar spoke of his wife being as much a part of him as the air he breathed, and that his heart always ached for her presence.

Bruce believed that faith could be inherited. Compare 2 Tim. 1:5. Oscar said each of his children were foreordained to be mighty in the testimony of Christ.

Oscar had perfect knowledge of the reality of the living Christ.

After touring Elder Oscar McConkie's mission, Elder Harold B. Lee said more spiritual experiences were happening there than in any other mission in the church. An Elder serving in Oscar's mission had a report from an eye Dr. that he would go blind in a few weeks. Elder Oscar M. gave him a blessing that the Lord wanted him to stay on his mission so he could heal his eyes and so he could reunite his parents. Elder O M then told the young Elder to go again to the eye Dr., and received a report of

complete healing from the Dr. Then 2 weeks later his parents reunited.

One investigator struggled with the word of wisdom, the Elders teaching him feared President Oscar M. would scare the investigator away by a strong sermon about the word of wisdom, and they fasted and prayed he would not speak on that topic. Then Pres. O M gave a **fiery sermon on the word of wisdom that those who didn't obey it would never find happiness in this life or the next, and that it was the very hinge upon which their salvation would swing.** After the sermon the investigator told the Elders he would never smoke again, handed over his cigarettes, and indeed never smoked again.

One Lamanite Indian chief in Pres. O M's mission was doing great work bringing many into the church but unexpectedly died. Pres. O M prayed as to why this would happen, and had a vision of that man in the spirit world preaching to a crowd of some 10 thousand Lamanites. In the vision, one dissenter arose and said, "Don't listen to this man, he is a Nephite!" the man replied, "I am not a Nephite, I am a Lamanite..."

Pres. Oscar McConkie prayed for the faith of Enoch and Elijah, When he arose from his knees, the voice of the Spirit spoke to him saying, “Enoch and Elijah obtained their faith through righteousness.” He understood that actions more than words are how we get faith.

When someone went overtime on a talk into Oscar’s time, **he didn’t go over into the next persons time**, but spoke for only 1.5 minutes, then promptly sat down.

It was made known to Oscar that **Lucifer covenanted** with himself to destroy him (Oscar) and his (Oscar’s) posterity. He said “Lucifer once said to my face: ‘I’ll destroy you and your family, if I can.’” On another occasion he was at the threshold door of the house of Lucifer but refused Lucifer’s invitation to enter.

The Lord showed Oscar that his **mother covenanted** with the Lord that her posterity would be blessed according to the amount they followed her righteous example of selfless service, love of the gospel, and profound respect for those who

represented the Lord in the offices of the priesthood.

Ch. 4: Boyhood in Monticello

Somewhere it said (chance of this being from some other McConkie talk though): We must work hard daily till we ache. Provide temporally or you have no spirituality.

Bruce almost died when born but was saved by a priesthood blessing from his father.

Oscar went to take his bar exam, he didn't know about common law pleading, and they forgot to administer that part of the exam.

Young Bruce rode in a wagon pulled by a goat. Bruce was in some fist fights as a kid and had C and B average grades. Bruce was being dragged by a horse, Oscar was prompted to get up and run, he did so, and eventually saw the incident, and saved Bruce.

A man spoke of his sons being able to beat Oscar's sons in a fight, Oscar said 'that may be so, but my son is going to grow up to be a good man.'

His grandmother would never turn anyone away from the dinner table, be they Indian, cowboy, or prisoner from the jail down the street.

They were the only members in the area. Sometimes they could travel a distance to a congregation very far away. Usually Bruce taught lessons from the Book of Mormon as a youth, even though it was his first time reading it. Sometimes Oscar would take the **family to a Presbyterian** church service. He said he just felt it was important for his children to form the **habit of attending church meetings**.

Ch. 5 Youthful Years

The children would spend the summer sleeping on a blanket in the lawn under the stars.

Bruce made sure to be home from a date Saturday night by midnight because it was the eve of the Sabbath.

They had dance cards back then.

Oscar had a small telescope and loved looking at the stars. He would point things out and quote scriptures about them.

Bruce was given a mission blessing to be like prophets of old and lead his brethren in the fight for righteousness. He was warned Satan would make a special effort to overthrow him. In this blessing he was told in a blessing that he was a leader in pre-mortality, and that all men who know him would look to him for council. He was told to fear no man but to reverence the power of God. He was told if he would clothe himself with power, the adversary would be subject to his will. When the spirit whispered to him he was to act and do so immediately. After giving the blessing, Oscar wondered if he was too bold, but the spirit commanded him to leave it as it stood.

MISSION

Ch. 6 Service as a Missionary

At the dedication of the Cumorah Monument, President Grant emphasized that Moroni was present and had come to accept the offering.

Bruce chose his wife who was the one who **most nearly replicated the grace and goodness of his mother.**

He said in speaking against the prejudice against the church, that if a person could go to Jerusalem in the times of Christ, he would hear people say the same things about Jesus Christ that they were now saying about Joseph Smith. President McKay said when the scales of prejudice fall from people's eyes, they see Joseph Smith with a certain degree of pride.

He wrote in his journal several times of spending time in the presence of Moroni on Hill Cumorah.

Answering some antagonists when asked how many wives they had, he responded, 'well we are still young, we only have 3 each.' The district president

said those investigators will likely come to church to learn more.

He would rate his speeches as good or poor, and record how many minutes the speeches were. He frequently rated his speeches poor. He bought a dictionary for his birthday and studied learning more vocabulary and to have a perfect diction.

He had a short companion and brought a wooden box for him to stand on. The Elder was nervous, and Bruce told him to not worry, that if he fell, it wouldn't be very far.

MARRIAGE

Ch. 7 His Marriage

In countless talks he told people that “the most important single thing that any member of this Church does in this life is to marry the right person, in the right pace, by the right authority.”

Bruce didn't need confirmation about his choice for who to marry, the obvious needed no confirmation.

At law school he had several anti-Mormon professors who went out of their way to make things particularly hard for him.

He said “I have always claimed to believe that Ph.D.’s and academic doctorates of all kinds were valued at a dime a dozen; now with inflation, some of them seem to be free for the asking.”

Though not enamored with men of supposed learning, he did highly prized education, and even mentioned in a conference talk his hope that his sons would earn doctoral degrees.

Joseph Fielding Smith Bruce’s father-in-law.

At Joseph Fielding Smith’s marriage, President Heber J Grant said “Joseph, kiss your wife.” Of this Joseph said, “He said it like he meant it, and I have been doing it ever since.”

Joseph F. Smith (father of J Fielding) spoke of when one of his children died at age 3. “The morning before she died, after being up with her all night, for I watched her every night, I said to her, “My little pet did not sleep all night.’ She shook her

head and replied, 'I'll sleep today, papa.' Oh! How those little words shot through my heart. I knew though I would not believe, it was another voice, that it meant the sleep of death and she did sleep. And Oh! The light of my heart went out. The image of heaven graven in my soul was almost departed."

Bruce Jr. died an infant. At the funeral service, obviously under the direction of the spirit, Brother Smith told of the Prophet Joseph Smith saying that some spirits were too pure to go through this life, that they had advanced so far in the Spirit World that their only need was to obtain a body and then go back for the work they had to do. At the hospital, the baby opened his eyes and looked at us as an adult would do. He examined those present head to toe, then he closed his eyes and never opened them again.

President J Fielding was easily awoken by crying babies and would often walk the halls at night rocking grandchildren.

WAR

Ch. 8 The War Years

“Righteous men are entitled, expected, and obligated to defend themselves; they must engage in battle when there is no other way to preserve their rights and freedoms and to protect their families, homes, land, and the truths of salvation which they have espoused.”

Those of Germany and Russia were very hostile to religion.

He complained about a church manual that didn't have many scriptures or words of the modern prophets but had many scholars cited, many theories of men which were subliminally critical to traditional religious teachings.

Bruce was careful not to undermine General Authorities.

He spoke of how the US is not a democracy but a representative & constitutional republic. He loved the constitution as did his father, as much as life itself. He spoke of the US as the place where the gospel was restored, and the place from which it was sent out to the rest of the world. Civil control

of religion is Lucifer's way of enforcing an enduring state of apostacy.

In a 1942 conference report J Reuben Clark spoke of the time when the constitution hangs by a thread being already fulfilled by that time.

Under no other government could the church have been restored.

J Reuben Clark spoke of the US Constitution is the basic law for all of the Americas, or Zion, as defined by the Lord (D&C 101:77-80).

Oscar had had negative experiences with the press. He said "When the truth is spoken, at the judgement bar of God, the press will have full representation in hell."

SEVENTY

Ch. 9 Called as a Seventy

At 31 he already had a reputation for speaking strongly and knowing the scriptures.

He said Elder Kimball was one of the most devoted men he had ever met.

When traveling by train to speaking assignments he used that time to write editorials for the Deseret News and study the scriptures.

Study the principles of the gospel, for “the Lord does not pour a testimony into a vacuum.”

“There is nothing in this world that I would rather do than have the privilege of preaching the gospel and of devoting such time and abilities as the Lord may bless me with to the building up of his kingdom.”

Between sessions of conference he was in his office working on editorials. He would return after conference and work into the night.

He asked Bishop Worthlin if the 1st ten conferences are the hardest, Bishop Worthlin replied “No. The hardest conference is always the one coming up.”

He served 26 years in the first council of the Seventy

For the 1st 25 years of their marriage they had **little time for vacation**. They would occasionally pack the family into the car to go on conference assignments together.

CHARACTER

Ch. 10 Things Great and Small

Glen Rudd said of Bruce, “Many people thought Bruce was stiff and a bit arrogant, a kind of know-it-all, but he wasn’t. He was one of the sweetest, kindest individuals you could ever meet; he just didn’t know how to relax at the pulpit.” Bruce was very warm and friendly when not on formal assignment. Glen said “Bruce loved his wife. I’ve never seen a man more affectionate to a wife than he was. He liked to have her by him all the time.”

Bruce spoke with another of wanting to climb the highest mountain in site. 5 minutes later they took off to climb it, without any supplies.

Oscar blessed one of his sons James that he would write the greatest music ever written. James died prematurely, and was told by the Lord that this

blessing was still to come to pass, that death did not discontinue blessings.

His wife wasn't familiar with the concept of allowance when asked for it from their children. Their children were to save half their earnings for their missions. This communicated to them that it was very important to go on their missions.

Joseph Fielding Smith was easy to please. If they were late somewhere traveling, it didn't bother him. He didn't seek special accommodations in his travels, and was always considerate and kind.

Someone said to Bruce to try and take it easy at the pulpit, to tell some interesting little stories, anecdotes, and humorous things. **Bruce said he would do what he could. He stood up and delivered his same style message.** He only had one thing on his mind when at the pulpit: to teach the people about the Savior and the Church. He was a teacher.

He never apologized for being inexperienced in some things. He simply said 'I've never had that experience, you know more about it than I do.' He

said “Who am I to tell someone how to hold a high council meeting? I’ve never been to one. I just teach doctrine.” Since he didn’t have experience as an administrator, in leadership sessions of stake conferences he just taught doctrine.

Elder Harold B. Lee said at general conference “What might have been contrary to the order of heaven in the early 1830’s might not be contrary to the order of heaven in 1960” (see page 178 for reference)

MORMON DOCTRINE

Ch. 11 The Mormon Doctrine Saga 1958 and 1966

-He took criticism very well. Spencer W. Kimball was assigned to be his mentor in changes to Mormon Doctrine.

-No one who personally knew Elder McConkie could question his integrity or discipline, and he was very obedient to priesthood direction.

-He timed himself to speak exactly the amount of time he was allotted.

-He followed counsel and minded his business.

-He said his negative comment about Catholics in his book, “it wasn’t smart on my part.”

-No suggestion that the title of the book be changed was ever made, even though at the time he was merely a Seventy.

-The writing of this book was back in a day before the Brethren did much writing, there weren’t established review systems.

-His practice was this: **When you are getting scolded, you offer no excuses, you just take it.**

-Since the book was to catalog doctrine not to rebuke heresies, much of the rebukes were dropped in the second edition (Note: Sort of a bummer; getting his full feelings on matters would be preferred.)

There was no editor. There were about 50 items Elder Kimball wanted Elder McConkie to revisit, they dealt with the word of wisdom, etc. Elder

McConkie was very appreciative of the feedback. McConkie did lots of the rewriting on his own.

The standard Elder McConkie held out for the members caused many to squirm.

The first edition called **birth control “gross wickedness and “rebellion against God”. Card playing was called “apostasy and rebellion”. Light speeches at church meetings were called “highly offensive” to the spirit.**

His stand on organic evolution (that it's false and evil) was the primary reason people criticized the book. The discussion on evolution was the longest entry in the book. He referenced President John Taylor's words against Darwin as the official church doctrine but dropped that statement in a later edition. The second edition he wrote “how scrubby and groveling (changed in second edition to weak and puerile) the intellectuality which, knowing that the Lord's plan takes all forms of life from a pre-existent spirit state, through mortality, and on to an ultimate resurrected state of immortality, yet finds comfort in the theoretical postulates that mortal life began in the scum of the sea, as it were, and has

through eons of time evolved to its present varieties and state! Do those with spiritual insight really think that the infinite Creator of worlds without number would operate in this way?" He said there is no harmony between these theories of organic evolution and revealed religion.

In the course of his ministry he did change his view on some doctrinal matters. He said any who serve as a general authority for 40 years and never change a view are not to be trusted. He was always anxious to grow and refine his views.

President Joseph Fielding Smith thought highly of the book and said he kept it at home where no one would borrow it and forget to return it.

His grandfather McConkie loved the book, and said if John the Revelator wanted to read it, he would have to do so at his house, and not go off with it.

The manager of Bookcraft (the publisher) never got a single complaint about the book.

The author doesn't know of a single instance in which Elder McConkie was asked to change or

chose to change his doctrinal position in subsequent editions of the book. The essence of each entry remains the same.

“To read a written sermon, except under very unusual circumstances, is a mockery of sacred things. There may be a few instances in which sermons may be read, just as there are a few formal occasions when prayers may be read” such as dedication of a temple. But usually, “a written sermon does no more than bear record that the preacher has neither the knowledge to draw upon, the faith to rely on the Spirit, nor the ability to attune himself to the spirit of inspiration.”

While he walked he often mentally organized talks, and gave talks to himself.

Elder McConkie spoke with a breadth of subjects similar to Brigham Young. Few have done this.

MISSION PRESIDENT

Ch. 12 The Australia Years 1961-1964

“Being a mission president is the best job in the world.”

He felt that missionary work and enjoying life were not mutually exclusive.

He tolerated occasional mistakes, and expected them to use innovative finding and teaching methods.

In one televised meeting he pointed to a Catholic priest on one side of him and a Methodist on the other and said, “Now, on this side we have a representative of the fallen apostolic faith and on the other side we have one who represents those who rebelled against them but lacked priesthood authority. And here [pointing to himself], in the middle, we have the restored gospel of Christ in all of its magnificent glory, having the Lord’s legal administrators who are authorized to baptize the faithful.” He said after the program to them “Well, brethren, until we meet in the unity of the faith, cheerio.”

He never missed the chance to extend to those to whom he spoke the invitation to be baptized.

He fought attitudes of priesthood leaders who said to go slow when preaching, to have

missionaries do meetings where the gospel isn't even mentioned. He fought the attitudes of the Australians, who claimed they didn't take things fast like the Americans.

He told his missionaries that the mission had a policy of baptizing in even numbers, and told his missionaries to go find someone else to also baptize at that night's baptism. They did.

At a conference, he asked if any were in attendance that knew the message was true but had been resisting baptism due to some worthiness issue. He found there was, and he got up and preached for 50 minutes on the necessity of baptism. He decided that he could, like Wilford Woodruff, preach a sermon then have people come up for baptism. He announced there would be a baptismal service after the conference where some in attendance would be baptized and told them the Lord expected them to respond and come into the church. One man's wife said her husband was ready for baptism, he resisted, and Bruce told him he could come peaceably or he would have one of the elders help him carry him. He put his arm under the man's and lifted him slightly off the floor and marched him to the

baptismal room and told him to get dressed. The man turned out to be very grateful. He **needed someone to tell him there was no turning back.** 13 were baptized by the end of that district conference.

The father of a recent convert told the missionaries to get out of his house. The district fasted and prayed and went back. He was very mad, but within 45 minutes they had him on his knees praying.

One woman yelled and swore at President McConkie, accusing him of vile things. Bruce said "I entertained the devil tonight."

One young man was a chain smoker, and on his way to becoming an alcoholic, he was converted, and called by the mission president to labor as a missionary.

His wife had not been set apart as a missionary, there was no reason why not, so he set her apart, blessing her with the gift of testimony which would bring many into the kingdom.

He rarely made formal preparation for the talks he gave.

He would honor a request to speak but **felt no obligation to confine the Spirit to someone else's topic.**

He prepared himself to **speak specifically in response to falsehoods being perpetuated** by a Protestant radio ministry.

He encouraged people to read the Book of Mormon for themselves rather than relying on opinions of experts. One man claimed to have read it. He told him to pray about it. The man said he told God to strike him dead if the book is true. Bruce replied "But you have to have to have faith."

He wrote this called "My Commission" related to being a missionary:

"I AM CALLED OF GOD.

My authority is above that of the kings of the earth. By revelation I have been selected as the personal representative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is my Master and he has chosen me to represent him; to stand in his place; to say and do what he himself would say and do if he personally were ministering among the very people to whom he has sent me.

My voice is his voice, and my acts are his acts; my words are his words, and my doctrine is his doctrine – for I am his agent.

My commission is to do what he wants done, to say what he wants said, to be a living, modern witness – in word and deed – of the divinity of his great and marvelous latter-day work.

And he that receiveth me, receiveth him, while he that rejecteth me, rejecteth him that sent me.

How great is my calling!”

He also wrote this called “My Mission” related to being a missionary:

“I AM A MISSIONARY.

My blessings are above those of the kings of the earth.

In my hands I hold the pearl of great price.

Mine is the same gospel taught by Paul, the same plan of salvation preached by Peter, the same

saving truths which sanctified Enoch and Elijah. I rejoice in the same priesthood held by Abraham and Melchizedek.

It is my right to see visions as did Nephi; to teach and testify as did Alma; **to entertain angels and work miracles** as did Nephi the Disciple; **to receive revelations as did Joseph the Seer;** to **walk daily in the light of the Spirit as did Wilford Woodruff;** to enjoy all of the gifts and graces which that Holy Being, who is no respecter of persons, always pours out upon those who love and serve him.

How great are my blessings!”

He told his missionaries to go to those in the missionary records who had been acquainted with the missionaries for some time and to tell them you have been acquainted with the missionaries for some time, it is time to get baptized, we expect you to be baptized.

He tried to buy equipment for the mission, it was \$1000. He would need to go through SLC and red tape to make any purchase of \$1000 or more, so he got the salesman to sell it to him for \$999. He was

known for **getting things done on his own without bothering SLC**. Thomas S. Monson said that the entire time Bruce was a mission president in Australia, **he only called SLC 3 times over those 3 years**. Monson used this as an example to tell mission presidents in training that they didn't need to call SLC every time they had a problem.

Bruce had a high priest put in as an elders quorum president when he found it necessary on one occasion. One disgruntle member reported this to President Benson in a leadership meeting. President Benson said "I'm sorry I can't hear the question." He repeated the question 3 times and got the same answer from President Benson 3 times, then the man finally got it and dropped the question.

He said **all great men climb mountains**, Moses, the brother of Jared, Nephi, etc. He held a meeting with his missionaries on a mountain top.

Whenever we **tune our souls to the wavelength on which the Holy Ghost is broadcasting, we will receive revelation, for he is a revelator**. Attuned thus, we can see the vision of D&C 76, or anything else expedient for us to see. This will all

happen with compliance to law. He explained that this is similar to television picture transmission through space, and that we can know it occurs without a perfect knowledge of how.

The sort of thing that we ought to desire above all else if we are spiritually inclined is to know what the Lord would have us do

When he left his mission, 4 times as many people were being baptized per year as when he first came.

Of his time as mission president he said “**Our greatest achievement was the saving of delinquent missionaries.**” The next great achievement he said was delegating authority to local leaders to prepare several areas to become stakes.

He was **up consistently at 5 or 5:30**

He memorized the 104 lines of the poem “The Man From Snowy River” so he could quote it to his missionaries as he drove them to the airport on their way home.

TRADITIONS & FAMILY

Ch. 13 Family Traditions

“True greatness is found only in the family.”

For breakfast he always ate the same **whole wheat mush**. His wife ground the wheat in an old coffee grinder. Store bought cereal was only for special occasions, as there were 8 children in the family.

Bruce's **prayers always included that his sons would go on missions, and that his sons and daughters would marry in the temple**. It never occurred to his children to do otherwise. His role model which he considered perfect was a man with 12 children who all married in the temple, and which family fulfilled 12 missions. Bruce's 8 children all married in the temple, and fulfilled 8 missions.

Bruce always **kissed his wife goodbye** after breakfast. Before Bruce came home, his wife would finish her work, change her clothes, and **doll herself up for him**.

He would lay on the living room floor and read the Deseret News.

He was devoid of vanity, believing the **message is what mattered, not the appearance of the messenger**. He had holes in his socks and his wife urged him to not wear them at conference, but he said **if they can't keep their eyes off of my socks he didn't deserve their attention**.

They got a TV just because someone gave it to them. **Bruce never watched it**. He didn't use the car radio either. As he traveled, he planned and organized talks.

He enjoyed birdwatching.

When he had a free Saturday he would wake his kids early to go hike saying "Come on, great men climb mountains."

To avoid a falling rock his son was about to warn him but didn't have time, so the spirit told him to move, and he did in the nick of time.

Bruce couldn't cook at all.

The **importance of learning is something caught, not taught.** Children learn to love what their parents do. In their home, a love of the gospel was preeminent.

He **treated high school athletics with tolerance rather than excitement.** His enthusiasm was reserved for things like mission calls. He only gave praise for things that mattered.

His son (the author of this book) had a knee injury and so had to stop basketball and joined the debate team. Bruce marched around singing saying, “My son is going to use his brain, my son is going to use his brain.”

He didn’t give his children an allowance, they were expected to help.

Half of everything his children earned was to be saved for a mission fund.

He **spoke about the gospel constantly.** He wasn’t phony and didn’t seek to impress others.

He didn't suggest to people that they were something they were not.

Bruce and his wife **didn't bribe their children to read scriptures or nag them about religious duties**; instead they loved those things and their children imitated the example. Their children learned to put the Lord 1st by watching their parents do so.

He usually gave his children gifts of books, always with a note inside

He wrote to his son "The most important single thing that any Latter-day Saint ever does in this world is to marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority."

He didn't write his sons serving missions about what was going on at home, he wrote them Paul-like epistles.

He didn't teach his children sports, mechanics, etc., for he didn't know these things. He taught them hard work: to sweat, get blisters, and a sore back as part of a well-rounded life.

When his children asked gospel questions he didn't always answer immediately, but had them think. He would ask questions in return, which would show their level of understanding and how much thought they had put into the matter.

When someone was spiritually mature, he would answer their question. When someone spiritually immature asked the same question, he would say "I don't know."

He didn't bless each child as they started school, but rather blessed them on occasions such as missionary and military service or marriage. These blessings were recorded, they contained counsel and prophecy the equal of a blessing from an inspired patriarch. Each blessing was distinctly different.

Rather than letting his children choose the subject they would speak on in church, he assigned it, and he **always assigned them to speak on the First Vision & bear testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet.**

There was **no small talk about the weather or recent sporting events, nor concern about recent political** affairs when Bruce and his father-in-law Joseph Fielding Smith got together to talk. They always immediately talked about the gospel.

Each week they visited both sets of grandparents. Back then people knew how to visit.

Bruce and his wife belonged to groups who met monthly to discuss the gospel.

His mother insisted her **married children meet together frequently to study the gospel all together.** His dad would send people home to get their scriptures if they showed up without them. Bruce followed the same pattern with his married children.

Bruce would always use the scriptures as the source for teaching rather than himself or his experiences. He was **very guarded about his experiences and rarely shared them** with others. He told his son, **“Did it ever occur to you that you don’t teach gospel principles with stories?”** He thus taught that we shouldn’t expect the emotional impact of

stories to carry the gospel, but to let the principles stand on their own, and let the Holy Ghost carry a witness of them to people.

When his father began to have health problems, he became very concerned with watching his weight and exercising. He often walked almost 8 miles to the church office buildings. He took up jogging at age 65 and would sometimes just run then call his wife to pick him up wherever he got too tired to continue. He sometimes ran 15 miles. He wanted to run a marathon and sometimes watched those runners in July.

Christmas morning everyone dressed, made their beds, ate, and would line up on the stairs according to age. Then, Bruce would go into the living room, turn on the tree lights and see if Santa really came. He was always surprised. Christmas dinners were filled with telling of memories, laughing and crying together.

His father assured them before his death that after his death he would not cease to love pray for and be concerned about them.

Bruce usually spoke last at meetings but was prompted to speak first. He did so, then was notified about the worsening health condition of his father and was able to immediately leave for the hospital.

He wasn't pleased by gifts, no one could figure out what to give him. His son gave him a manuscript he had written to review, this pleased him very much.

Ch. 14 What Was It Like (to be his child)

Bruce said **"I would never brag about my children. If they are worth bragging about, someone else will do it for me."**

"his knowledge of the gospel, his love of God, and relentless pursuit of gospel truths were not appended to an office or calling. No office added to them, and no office could take from them. It is for the man to make the office, not the office to make the man." Pg. 246

“My father never threw a ball to me, never took me hunting or camping, nor did he have any idea how to change the oil in a car.”

He was gone virtually every Sunday on conference assignments.

He didn't teach his kids to tie a tie, or attend their Scouting awards. He never took them to a ball game. They never went to a movie together. “In short, **we were not a recreationally minded family.**”

He didn't teach them patience, he expected them to work with him quickly in the yard etc.

Activities they did together were work projects of tile, shingling, digging a root cellar, painting a house.

When he came **home in the evening** and his son **wasn't working** the first thing he would say was **“Mother, isn't there something Joseph can be doing?”**

Their mother taught them to garden weed and irrigate as Bruce was gone so often.

Bruce was fearless of sweat and calluses, for himself and his children.

His son's memories of him are ministering to the sick, instructing priesthood leaders, teaching the gospel, and listening to his remarkable conversations.

Joseph (his son, the author of this biography) realized he hadn't missed out on what mattered.

His son said he wanted to exercise his agency to not go to church one day. Bruce assured him he had **agency which in his family meant you could go to church willingly, or go unwillingly**, the choice is yours.

Joseph expounds on agency, relating that the baptism covenant means a commitment to go to church, and that **agency means “the right to act, the right to do our duty. It is not and cannot be the source of excuse for refusing to do the same.”** p248

When his son received his mission call, Bruce said to him, **“Now, son, what I want you to do is to read the Book of Mormon and report.” His son did this, then Bruce repeated the instruction 2 more times.** After this Bruce said, “Now we’ve laid the foundation. **You are ready to begin** your study of the Book of Mormon.” Then he tutored Joseph in the meaning of the book.

He told his son, who hadn’t had a better grade than a C in English class, “You will yet write books, and when you do, you be sure that they are worthy of your name.”

“He never just answered a question. He would always ask “find out” questions first. He wanted to know what we had done by way of preparation. His answers were an expression of the confidence he had in you. Usually you had to prime the pump – he didn’t just volunteer information. You had to almost twist his arm and prove that you were hungry to learn.” p250-1

Sometimes the answer to his son’s questions was “Look, junior, you have the same sources available

to you that I do to me.” He was teaching a weaning now that he had been taught how to learn.

D&C 9 says to not just ask God questions, but to try to figure things out, make your best conclusions, then seek confirmation. This is how his son asked him about gospel questions. Sometimes it seemed at the **beginnings** of these conversations Bruce didn’t know the answer to his son’s questions. Sometimes they disagreed.

Joseph points out the saying that “It has been said that a teacher has succeeded when you no longer need him.” Bruce created a well of understanding in his children.

Bruce said **no one is required to “drink below the horses”, meaning, don’t rely on the spiritual experiences of others.**

J. Reuben Clark said to Marion G. Romney **that we shouldn’t fawn to the world for approval. We don’t care when they have things to say against us, so we should likewise not care when they have things to say in favor of us.** Don’t seek confirmation from the world. p252

He was anxious for his return missionary son to marry. He said, “Son, don’t you think you ought to have a goal? How many dates do you think you should have each week?”

His son began to tell him of a **girl he liked whom he had met a week and a half ago. Bruce said “marry her.” He explained, “You’ve heard the story of Isaac and Rebekah, haven’t you?” (they met, walked into Sarah’s tent, were married, and loved each other)** He continued, “Certainly you’re as smart as Isaac, aren’t you?”

He read the standard works cover to cover in preparation to write each volume of his Messiah series. For the promised messiah, he read them through looking for all of those promises. For millennial Messiah, he read them through again looking for all those promises, etc. He used this as the basis for the book rather than quotes from scholars and experts. No research grants. No compilation of quotes.

He only quoted others in books when he found they could say it better than he could, and if it

squared with the scriptures. He said, “Last week I quoted Parley P. Pratt for the first time my life.”

He said we can't leave the pondering and praying to others and experts or we experience spiritual atrophy.

On one occasion Joseph had to explain doctrine to some experts. Instead of helping him, Bruce said “he is doing just fine” and slipped out of the room.

He said teach gospel principles not just faith promoting stories.

He said **“teach what they should have asked you to teach.”**

No office can bestow faith

“Everyone is **responsible for what they believe and what they choose not to believe.** No office can excuse them from that responsibility.”

Joseph Fielding Smith was repeatedly invited to a Christmas open house by a man for whom he had great love and respect, but he **never attended because it was always held on a Sunday.**

The measure of a person's **spirituality can be determined by his loyalty to the prophet Joseph Smith**. Revelations of the restoration are the key to understanding the bible. It's easier to convert someone to the truth of the Book of Mormon than to bring them to a correct understanding of what the bible is really teaching. To study the **bible without the aid of modern revelation was the same as denying** that we have living prophets.

Some said he 'went beyond the period at the end of the sentence' in his explanations. He replied, "**If you can't go beyond the period that ends the sentence, you don't have the Spirit**; and if you don't have the Spirit, you shouldn't be teaching." A gospel teacher has the right to interpret scripture & expound on it. (Joseph points out how this is not a stretch when we consider how God gives priesthood to every worthy man. The fact that agency and priesthood are misused sometimes doesn't justify doing away with either.) Scriptures are **sufficiently ambiguous** so that those desiring to misconstrue them may do so. This is **intentional** on the Lord's part, allowing how we interpret scripture to be a test of our spiritual integrity.

Asked how to discern between unrighteous domain and proper use of priesthood authority, he replied “you don’t!” **Don’t constantly question what your leaders tell** you to do. Those who don’t constantly question them have a rich portion of the spirit. When asked **who was going to talk at General Conference, he replied “Peter James & John.”** The First Presidency was to speak, and it was the same to him. He said, “I just do what the Brethren tell me.” When the prophet President Kimball told the saints to grow a garden, he did not consider himself excused as he was an apostle. He created a garden space in his yard despite there not being a natural place for one.

“True greatness is found only in the family.”

His favorite topic to preach on was eternal marriage. He took considerable interest in those whom his children chose to date. One of his daughters told a man who asked her out that he **would need a temple recommend to date her.** He came to their home, **and spoke with Bruce while she waited** in the kitchen. He gave Bruce a letter from his bishop attesting to his worthiness. Bruce carefully reviewed the letter and asked follow-up questions. Only when that was done was

his daughter allowed to make her appearance. There was no question in the minds of his children as to who was acceptable for them to date.

In the revelations the **blessings associated with missionary work are almost always associated with the missionary, not the convert.** He motivated **missionaries** by telling them the doctrine that they were there **to work out their own salvation.**

“It is **certainly not important whether people have a white collar or a blue collar job.**” He considered **the amount of money people had** was usually the result of accident or chance, and it **mattered little.** When it comes to jobs, “Don’t try to choose the thing that will make life easy. **Look for something that will make life hard.**”

He told his son’s roommate to ensure his son was not spending too much time studying the scriptures at university, and that he spent sufficient time studying for his classes.

When asked if there was ‘a special strain of savior gods’ he replied **“What earthly good could**

possibly come from teaching such a thing?” If a doctrine is good, its fruits will be good, and vice versa. The doctrine of an elite line with different standards & laws would not help us.

Note: It's most likely a false doctrine anyway. The more likely and reasonable truth is that an exalted man (any who qualify) qualify their firstborn in the spirit to be a savior of a large cohort of their spirit children who will inhabit many worlds.

He would only tell certain stories during talks if the spirit affirmed to do so.

He could recognize the promptings of the spirit with perfect surety, some perceived that as arrogance.

A BOLD DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

Ch. 15 The Nature of the Man

“Tell them to warm up the tar. I’m coming to speak.” Detractors only added to his confidence. He knew Joseph Smith was to be spoken of for

good and evil over all the earth, and that if he echoed the doctrines of Joseph Smith, his name would be treated similarly. Criticism followed him like a shadow. “The measure of a man is not found in who speaks well of him but who speaks against him. It is just as important to have the right enemies as it is to have the right friends.” p265 He wanted all of his writing to offend the Devil. He didn’t seek the praise of others. He didn’t care what topic he would speak on, he only cared about being in tune with the spirit.

He was an agent of the Lord. **“Agents represent their principal. They have no power of their own.** They act in someone else’s name. They do what they are told to do. They say what they are authorized to say – nothing more, nothing less.” Christ is the messenger of the covenant. Reject him, and we reject the covenant he brought. In general conference he said **“What I am saying is what the Lord would say if he were here.”**

Note: Similarly, I once taught a group of missionaries to follow the instruction of our mission president, because if Jesus Christ were the

mission president, he would be asking us to do the same thing, and the spirit confirmed the message.

Sometimes prophets grew very old. When asked why the Lord allows that he said, “Whenever the prophet ceases to be a vigorous voice, all the wolves come out to bay. Perhaps this is the Lord’s way of allowing the wolves to identify themselves.”
p266

He had **no interest in style** or fashion. He wore short sleeved shirts and didn’t know what a power tie is. When his hair was cut badly, he didn’t mind, he just said “it would probably grow back”. He relaxed in clothes that were well worn and comfortable. He didn’t mind socks with holes. He didn’t like suits and ties and only put them on when going to a meeting or his office.

He wasn’t critical when priesthood leaders made procedural mistakes.

He did not dominate discussions. He had to be prodded to talk. “When asked about his reluctance to say much around his extended family, he expressed concern about being misquoted and

about having sacred things sensationalized. There were very few people with whom he dared shed his office to truly be himself. **In teaching, he rarely shared personal experiences.”** P.267 His brother Oscar shared instances of his brother's life to illustrate principles. He told Oscar if he did that again he would not be called to speak again.

He had no interest in being cute or funny. He learned this from his father and from Joseph Fielding Smith. If they said something funny while speaking it was unintentional. They weren't storytellers, and didn't feel the gospel had to be compatible or light-minded.'

When his son (the author of this biography) **made some clever quips at his mission farewell, one person said he would be a good missionary. Bruce said, loud enough for him to hear, “Well, if he can preach the gospel as well as he does nonsense, he will be fine.”**

This being said, Bruce was not humorless, and it was always pleasant being with him. He watched birds at 5am, and collected and polished rocks in his garage.

He was terrible at singing, but sang hymns most of the way on a trip with his daughter. He knew all the **words to all the verses of an hour's worth of hymns.** He did **not like popular music.**

His method of **studying the scriptures**, as well as the method of Joseph Fielding Smith, was basically that they had **no method.** They just studied **frequently, consistently and intensely.** Bruce “had a score of loose-leaf binders full of scriptural notations and analyses of every doctrine he found in his study of the Book of Mormon. **He always studied with a purpose.**” p274

He could not read a book without marking it up. After **finishing it he would write the date he finished it, and a review** of the book. To one book about ancient Israel his note was: “100% anti-Christ, 75% anti-Jewish, 50% pro-Baal & Pro Canaanite, Of questionable historical accuracy, Highly speculative, Unreliable, Written with a bias intent to foster unbelief, Not objective in any sense, Almost pure hogwash” Some other book reviews he wrote “not inspired writing” and “Splendid Fiction!” and “not a word of truth in it” etc.

People asked **when he found time to write**. His wife said “on my time”. He made good use of holidays, days off, etc. when free from other assignments. His wife said, “more correctly, however, the answer should have been **all the time**”. His wife said “Although he was a fun-loving, normal, well-balanced, and interesting person, **he seemed to have the gospel on his mind all the time.**” Instead of flowers in vases they kept pencils and **pens in flower vases, in drawers, on tables, and especially a shirt pocket with a bit of paper**, available for when a thought came so it could be promptly recorded. He had to write while the inspirational juices were flowing. “Then those thoughts were organized, and outlines made, and when he began to write on the typewriter, he seldom had to change a word.” There were innumerable notes with ideas written on them for talks books etc.

“People were always asking him questions; therefore the subjects he chose to write about were chosen because he felt a need for them.”

He wasn't the least upset by those who were critical. “He did not care about what they had to say

as long as he felt it was what the Lord wanted said.”
p276

As he walked to and from campus while a student, he would assign himself gospel subjects to organize and speak on. He followed that practice when he had to drive long distances as a general authority.

“One evening when Dad was lying on the floor reading the paper and she [his wife] was reciting a litany of things they ought to be doing. Dad’s response to all of it was a loving “Amelia, relax.”
p277

He warned against becoming “truer than true,” and made time to relax. He said
nuttiness/fanaticism in one area makes it a short step to nuttiness/fanaticism in another. **We can’t practice one virtue at the expense of another virtue.**

“The Lord doesn’t reveal himself to blabbermouths.” p278

“it’s not who you are in the kingdom that counts; it’s how well you keep the commandments.”

“Life was never intended to be easy.” “The pursuit of easy things makes men weak.”

He chastised one writer for taking an entirely different view on the scriptures than what the prophets had.

“When the Lord comes he will find in every nation and among every people the Saints of God who, speaking every language, will then be qualified to live and reign on earth with him a thousand years. Whenever a stake of Zion is created in any part of the earth, that portion of the earth’s surface becomes Zion and the gathering of Israel then consists of coming to that area...We do not believe that the Saints will come out of all nations and gather to Jackson County before the Second Coming. We do believe that Zion will be built up in all nations before the Lord comes, and that after he arrives there will be added glorious things connected with the gathering of Israel...Eventually the whole earth will become Zion.” p280

His usual policy is to not engage in theological debates

Note: I remember hearing of one address of his where he slammed the pulpit (I believe it was at the MTC) and loudly said “We do not bible bash! We do not bible bash! **We do not bible bash! But when we do, we win!**”

He chastised one for applying scriptures to the wrong group of people.

Someone saw him walking in a hall and quickly approached him saying, “Elder McConkie, you once said...” Before he could utter another word Bruce said, **“Son, if I said it, it was true”** and kept walking.

One missionary wanted to go home. **He told the boys father to relax and let the mission president run the mission.** One of the Brethren called him to assure he knew what he was doing, he assured him he did. He kept the boy’s passport locked in a safe, and the boy couldn’t get a new one from the Consul without his approval. The missionaries sang a song which said, “President

McConkie's favorite word is no. Elder _____ will tell you so." Another boy wanted to leave and went on a hunger strike and lost 30 pounds in 30 days and many other things to try and get out of the country. President McConkie **made it clear that his only way to leave the country was to die**, in which case he would bury him in Australia, or to start swimming, in which case the sharks would get him. Eventually the boy snapped out of it and **later thanked** him for insisting he stay and make a man out of himself. p282

He was not the kind of leader who had to have his hands on everything. "As an Apostle he desired to do only those things that were apostolic, while trusting others to labor in their own callings and offices."

He gave assignments and expected people to follow through. When they did he praised them publicly. When they didn't he spoke to them about it privately. Soon he had the best running ward in the stake, with all their statistics improving. Bishops who tried to run everything themselves didn't have thriving wards. "I loaded everything I could on my counselors and expected them to do the work." He

doesn't do anything as president of a stake which others can't do. He had his counselors do the interviews, and shorten the interviews if they couldn't fit them all in, etc. As an Apostle it was the same. He said **if the angel Moroni came to visit, he wouldn't teach about making family group sheets, but would expound doctrine. He was not excited about administrative meetings, he was a teacher.** He said "running a committee is not that hard," that the "management fellows" didn't get things done any better than he did.

He showed his kids hate mail sent to him to remind his kids that there was opposition.

He witnessed leaders being where different people were inspired to call the same person independently, and that person not being on the suggested interviewed list of people. This was a person who converted to the Church from the Reorganized Church 15 months prior.

He said he never spoke at a Saturday session without hearing himself misquoted at meetings the following day.

Ch. 16 As He Saw It

“It is the practice of the Lord to give added knowledge to those upon whose hearts the true meanings and intents of the scriptures have been impressed.

He said as the early brethren, “The kingdom of God or nothing.”

He said concerning spiritual and intellectual concerns, “We don’t want the pendulum to swing too far one way or the other.”

He said, the “practice of the Church was the interpretation of the scriptures.”

When his stake president Marion G Romney found out he was in law school, he released him from being a stake missionary. McConkie taught to be **careful about giving assignments to people busy** with such things.

He doubted that the second coming would happen in the lifetime of his grandchildren.

Note: No one knows the hour. We also know that before the second coming, many epic zion events happen, possibly decades before the second coming, so exciting times are at the door. There are many unknowns. Personally I believe it is sooner than apparently McConkie estimated it. The grandchildren of McConkie would now be adults.

Things to occur before Christ's return include the gospel being taught in every nation (Rev. 14:6-7) in their own tongue (D&C 90:11) by their own people (Alma 29:8), and the congregations of the saints would be in all nations (1 Ne. 14:12) presided over by people who've received the fullness of the gospel (Rev. 5:9-10).

McConkie taught against the idea of the personal relationship with Christ, of singling out one member of the Godhead for "a special relationship." If we were to do such, it would be with the Father.

He taught that people shouldn't continually seek "special blessings," depending on others for such.

He taught people going on dates shouldn't pray together, that such spiritual intimacy should be reserved for marriage.

He taught people to make their own decision about who to marry, not to ask others who to marry. Use good judgment and don't insist on a heavenly revelation. Don't ask the Lord to make the decision for you.

He taught if you go out of this life on the straight and narrow, you go on to an eternal reward in the Father's kingdom. You don't need to feel that you have to be perfect to be saved. You can't fall off of the straight and narrow in the life to come. This life is the time to prepare for eternity. Work zealously in this life and you'll be saved. Stay in the mainstream of the church, live upright, and for all practical purposes, your calling and election is made sure, the end result will be the same.

The vast majority of those who followed Christ in the premortal life will be saved in the celestial kingdom. The Matt. 7:14 on "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way...and few there be that find it" is about the Saviors day and ours. But many will

receive the gospel from the preaching in the spirit world, many received it in Enoch's city, the city of Salem, after the visit of Christ in the New World, and other places the Savior visited, and in the Millennium many more will gain salvation than the rest of the history of the earth. He said "All faithful saints, all who have endured to the end, depart this life with the absolute guarantee of eternal life."

Joseph Fielding Smith preached at a funeral "that no righteous man is ever taken before his time."

The welfare state worked against some relying on the Lord for temporal support as they relied on the government instead. This was a common view in Europe, and the Europeans were more exclusive about different cultures. In America where all were seen as created equal before the law and entitled to be treated with respect created an environment where people felt free to exchange views and change their lifestyles, so they were more open to the gospel.

His notes for his message "Three Pillars of Eternity" in a 1981 BYU devotional said "Evolution is not a science; it is a religion. It is not

an objective analysis of what is found in a test tube; it does not involve experiments that all researchers can duplicate. It is, rather, a mass of theoretical postulates by which its devotees seek to explain the origin and destiny of man without reference to revelation.”

He knew people labeled him as a bigot for renouncing evolution, but he noted that in true science, no offense is taken when someone attacks a tenet, because facts stand on their own.

His 1982 article published in the Ensign at the request of the First Presidency detailed scriptural conflicts of the theory of evolution.

When the revelation granting priesthood to all worthy males came (including blacks) he said “Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.” (From “All are alike unto God” message delivered to the Church Educational System in SLC, Aug. 18

1978, in Charge to Religious Educators, 2nd Ed.
152-155. In this biography volume on p299)

He expected sons to do better than their fathers.

He noticed that the Russians were good at promoting their country and used lots of propaganda to get their message over, but that the US was very bad at it, just showing a few displays of astronauts to the moon. The US weren't willing to brag about their constitution etc.

Some scriptures have dual interpretations.

In the Promised Messiah p515 he taught, "Those who preach by the power of the Holy Ghost use the scriptures as their basic source of knowledge and doctrine." That they "...begin with what the Lord has before revealed to other inspired men." That the Lord gives more knowledge to those who know the meanings and intents of scriptures. He gives them additional information which those who don't know the scriptures can never have. They teach what the prophets have taught AND what is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer

of faith (D&C 52:9). The true living church applies teachings from the past to current situations.

He taught that we can't present the message of the restoration independent of the testimony of Joseph Smith. We can't just profess faith in Christ, we must profess our faith in that Christ revealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet. He said, "Joseph Smith is the revealer of the knowledge of Christ for our dispensation. If it were not for him and the witness and testimony he has given, we would not have more knowledge than the sectarian world has; hence, we bear testimony of Joseph Smith."

He said "Now I'm not too impressed with the fact that we try to be very soft and very gentle in all the visitors centers and in the missionary work and in everything else, just trying to leave people feeling good. I think we've got a message, and it ought to be delivered. It's a worldwide message, and our centering should be on Joseph Smith. Here is Joseph Smith and he revealed Christ, and here is Christ, and here is salvation through this system. That kind of approach will have the effect of dividing people on one hand or the other, but so you divide them. You divide them- you get some

people who are interested. You don't make friends with everyone."

President Clark said you can't tell the Joseph Smith story without offending people.

President Clark said we don't need to be so anxiously concerned about not offending the world.

President Clark said "Jesus offended people. now we are trying not trying to offend people but he offended them by the nature of the message that he presented, and we, in my judgment, just have to more affirmatively present our message."

Elder McConkie conducted a missionary training center survey of their testimony where he asked missionaries to rate whether they knew believed didn't know or doubted the doctrines of:

1. God is my father the father of my spirit
2. Jesus is the Christ the son of God
3. Joseph Smith is a prophet of God
4. the Book of Mormon is the word of God
5. Spencer W Kimball is a prophet of God today.

The lowest rated of these were item three Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and item for the Book of Mormon is the word of God. To this elder McConkie said, **“something's wrong. Something's terribly wrong!”**

Elder McConkie said "maybe in our efforts as a church to ensure that everyone knows we are Christian, we have gone too far. A while back we changed our missionary discussions to make our first discussion a message about Christ. It seemed at the time a good thing to do, given that Jesus is the head of the church. But what was the result? A decrease in convert baptisms and a decrease in the number of copies of the Book of Mormon placed by full-time missionaries from 1 million per year to 500,000. We are not teaching the restoration as we ought to."

Elder McConkie said “we will never achieve the quantity and quality of converts that President Kimball and the Lord have envisioned as long as we continue to stress the similarities between us and those of other faiths. It is only when we stress the differences that we are able to make our

distinctive contribution in the world and thus make our influence felt."

D&C 5:10 and 20:11-17 and 31:3-4 and 49:1-4 say we must be true to the restoration.

We are under condemnation because of our neglect of the Book of Mormon and Latter-Day revelation says D&C 84:54-61.

Ch. 17 A Time to Laugh

When elder McConkie was called to preside over a mission in Australia he said "well, I have been writing again." (As in, it was to get him to shut up.)

He explained that being a general authority means that administrative authority delegated overlaps local boundaries. And the general authorities are subject to the strict discipline the Lord always imposes on his saints and those who preside over them. He said many were qualified and could be general authorities if called upon. He said general authorities may not be authorities in the sense of

doctrinal knowledge, the intricacies of church procedures, or the receipt of the promptings of the spirit. That a call to an **administrative position of itself adds little knowledge or power of discernment.**

When he was a boy he would walk around with a broom handle between his elbows and his back to ensure the habit of standing straight and tall.

APOSTLESHIP & MINISTRY

Ch. 18 Call to the Apostleship

For McConkie knowledge of the divinity of Christ was the result of personal revelation.

When Elder Marion G. Romney called Oscar McConkie (Bruce's younger brother) to be a stake president, Romney said, "Now, Oscar, when you speak, **make sure you are right, because the way you say it is going to make people mad anyway.**"

McConkie never left an assignment unfinished; what could be done tomorrow, he did today.

“The family unit and working in the cause of righteousness are more important than any position. Service is essential to salvation, but the place where we serve is not.”

People not called to leadership positions in this life could well be called to such positions in the spirit world. He also foresaw a **future day when the church organization we now have will no longer exist**. Apostles and prophets continue until there is unity in the faith, so at some point in the millennium they won't be needed. All will be converted, we won't need special witnesses.

Entitlement to exaltation and your place in the patriarchal order depends on how you live (not positions held).

Ch. 19 Among the Nations

In the name of the God of Israel, he commanded bodies to mend and organs to function.

Buddhists by instinct think the family unit exists after death. A Lutheran minister tried to convince

Buddhists that this wasn't the case, then the Mormon film "Man's Search for Happiness" showed the family indeed as continuing in heaven. When the Lutheran asked why our missionaries preach not just to the Buddhists but also to the Christians, Elder McConkie said, "we think it is just as important for a Lutheran to be saved as it is for a Buddhist." He also related the first vision to this minister, then the minister left. Some missionaries lingered with the minister and the minister said he didn't want to talk to McConkie. Hearing this, McConkie said, "if I were a Lutheran minister, I wouldn't want to talk to me either."

A native boy shined his shoe, it was larger than the boy had ever shined, the boy kept measuring it in astonishment, so Bruce paid him double.

Ch. 20 The Nature of His Ministry

One couple tried to teach that a person should pray to Christ. McConkie taught them this was wrong. The couple was not satisfied and tried to speak with President Harold Lee. Lee declined to meet with

them and advised them that if they did not follow the counsel given them the spirit of the adversary would have power over them.

McConkie said of this, "this is a perfect illustration of how **doctrinal misjudgment can lead people away from the truth and eventually out of the church. People begin to believe something that is not taught by the church, then they refuse to accept the council of those whose right it is to interpret** the doctrines, then they feel the church is out of line and they are right, and finally they begin to criticize the brethren. The spirit of the devil takes over in their lives, and unless they repent they go out of the church to destruction."

To worship as Christ worshiped is to worship the Father. To center our worship on anyone or anything other than the Father throws the entire plan of salvation out of balance. McConkie said "if there were some need - which there is not! - to single out one member of the godhead for a special relationship, the Father, not the Son, would be the one to choose." We pray only to the Father. Prayers do not go through Christ or anyone else. Hebrews

4:16 says we are entitled to come boldly unto the throne of grace.

Some "intellectuals without strong testimonies" advocate that God is forever "progressing in truth and knowledge." "unless they repent, they will live and die weak in the faith and will fall short of inheriting what might have been theirs in eternity."

An 18-year-old had an incurable skin disease from birth. He got out of bed to meet with Elder McConkie who asked have the elders administered to him? He was told they had many times. After a moment of silence Elder McConkie blessed him saying "the Lord has given you this affliction to prepare you for the work that lies ahead. I promise you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that your health will never stand in the way of your serving the Lord." The disease was rebuked and the blessing of healing was soon realized. p359

A mother of two had contracted a rare blood disease which prohibited her from having more children. She was impressed to touch the edge of Elder McConkie's jacket which she hesitantly did. The moment she touched her finger on the hem of

his jacket he suddenly spun around and extended his hand to her which she shook and uttered thank you. He nodded and went back to what he was doing. She was healed, the doctor was baffled, she had three more children. p360

He did not feel constrained to follow a particular procedure. He sought to follow the lead of the spirit in speaking and administration etc.

One patriarch withdrew money to take his family to the temple and when he opened the envelope a few days later he noticed he was paid about \$750 extra, which he returned. He soon learned that he was about \$75 short to pay for tickets to get back home to his family. A stranger handed him the amount. After giving the money to the ticket agent he turned around to thank the man who had disappeared. p362

When a series of interviews for callings was not getting anywhere, he prayed on his knees, stood, and the thought came of who to call. He and his partner had the same impression.

One mission was in a poor condition; they had a goal not to baptize anyone unless they were absolutely certain that the one they were baptizing would remain in the church because if one baptized were to fall away they would be held responsible at the bar of judgment. Because of this mission president's indoctrination teaching these false messages, a negative spirit ruled the mission and the work of the Lord was at a standstill.

Some missionaries asked about Adam God doctrine and Elder McConkie noted, "I was talking with some power and fluency about this doctrine explaining that these interpretations were false and defining how and where the church stood on Adam and on the members of the godhead. In the midst of this discussion, under circumstances where I was far more fluent and expressive than my normal capacity allows, it suddenly seemed to me as though a pillar of light extended up from me endlessly and the clear unmistakable impression came from the spirit of the Lord that what I was teaching was true; that the interpretations made by various people of Brigham Young's quotations was totally false and then if I felt so inclined I was perfectly at liberty to

peak in the Lord's name as to the truths I was then declaring." p366-7

Note: Surely there's more to the subject of Adam than meets the eye, but no doubt, he was inspired to give the message he did to the missionaries. Remember also that the missionaries are to preach gospel basics, as Joseph Smith said, to not dabble in the mysteries.

One approached Elder McConkie and said "I am a member of the Church of Christ" McConkie replied, "well you can repent just like anyone else." The man began to harass Elder McConkie and tell him that if he was an apostle, he needed to be able to heal him. McConkie replied "healings come by faith. There is no possible way for you to be healed because you do not have faith. You have an evil spirit." The man persisted still citing the New Testament about apostles healing and McConkie said "I am doing exactly the same thing toward you that Peter or Paul would do, and that they did do, when people with evil spirits came to them." The man just persisted in demanding that he heal him. McConkie then said "you have an evil spirit, and there is something I want you to know. I'm going

to tell it to you and I want you to write it in your journal, and if you do not keep a journal, to write it on a piece of paper and your wife who is here listening will be a witness that I told it to you. I want you to know that unless you repent, you will go to hell. I've never told anyone else this before, but I am telling you.” p369-70

When the Mark Hoffman forgery documents came out, Elder McConkie rejected them on theological grounds, knowing that those documents could not represent the voice of Joseph Smith. He also noted that there was a lack of language indicating the conferral of keys and that the man to whom all of the keys of the Kingdom had been restored could not forget to bequeath them to his successor. McConkie did not know anything about Hoffman, but he did know Joseph Smith, and those documents did not represent Joseph Smith.

Ch. 21 Great Events

Boyd K Packer said, "we live in a day of great events relating to the scriptures."

The third article of Faith about all being saved through Christ by obedience; in this context the word saved means to be exalted or obtain all the blessings of the Celestial Kingdom. He cited D&C 6:13 "if thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the Kingdom of god, which is the greatest of all the gifts of god; for there is no greater no gift greater than the gift of salvation"

When the 12 were praying about the ban on priesthood African being lifted there was a great Pentecostal outpouring of the spirit such as none of those present had ever before experienced. McConkie observed "I think the Lord waited to give this new direction to his earthly Kingdom until his church was big enough and strong enough to absorb those of all races and cultures, without being overwhelmed by the world, as the primitive saints were when the church in their day gained a general acceptance in the Roman empire."

Footnotes and cross references to the standard works were added in the 1979 LDS edition of the King James Bible and the 1981 new edition of The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants

and the Pearl of Great Price. This work was done under the direction of Thomas Monson, Boyd Packer, and later Bruce McConkie. The LDS Bible King James was now cross-referenced with the three other books of scripture. It took about 10 years to make this addition. McConkie's contribution was the chapter headings which constitute a doctrinal commentary of each chapter. McConkie pushed for adding the Joseph Smith translation saying that Joseph Smith should not have to compete for room with the words of any Bible scholars interpretation, and that we need a little more JST and a little less dictionary.

Ch. 22 Special Contributions

Boyd K Packer said, **"If there ever was a man raised up unto a very purpose, if ever a man was prepared against a certain need - it was Bruce R. McConkie."**

McConkie would not use humor etc. in his church talks, he went right to the point. He said, "doctrinal teachers will be quoted a hundred years after their

death while the popular speakers who people find so entertaining will be long forgotten."

Bruce was advised that if he wanted his book to be read it had to be not above a 14-year-old reading level. His response was "I will not do it. If I cannot raise the level of understanding in the church, I will not write." He was tasked with over-viewing a manuscript to see if there was any reason that it shouldn't be published. He said, "I wish I'd been asked if I could think of any reason why it should be." He did not like the substitution of "goose pimples and fluff" for saving principles. He thought such things were an insult to the gospel. But teaching from the scriptures energized him. When he taught religion classes at BYU and UofU he had more energy at the end of the class than when he began.

Some in scholarly circles in the church have viewed the Joseph Smith translation with skepticism because it is not always in harmony with the ancient manuscripts. The prophet did not use manuscripts in making his translation, he simply used the King James version of the Bible and the gift and power of God, it was a translation by the spirit of

revelation. We have to choose between the spirit of revelation as Joseph Smith had, and loyalty to ancient manuscripts, all of which are to some degree at variance with each other. For McConkie it was an easy choice to go with the Joseph Smith translation, that such presents the reader a greater Christ than any other translation of the Bible.

His Messiah book series was written 64 years after James E Talmage's Jesus the Christ, and McConkie's books drew more heavily upon the Joseph Smith translation and D&C 138 which was received after Talmage's work. McConkie's book "A New Witness for the Articles of Faith" took a different approach from Talmage's work 8 decades earlier. Talmage tried to give credibility to Joseph Smith and Mormonism by showing that its doctrines were based on the bible. But Elder McConkie sought to explain them in the light of modern revelation. He felt that the best evidence that God has spoken in our day is found in what God has said today.

McConkie was *by choice* in the front ranks of the defenders of the faith and was a rightful heir to the wrath of those who opposed such principles.

McConkie had his own list of scripture including the Wentworth letter of Joseph Smith and the lectures on faith (which were published with the D&C until 1921) and the First Presidency exposition on the Origin of Man 1912 and the Doctrinal Disposition of the First Presidency on the Father and the Son 1916 and the King Follet Discourse of Joseph Smith. To him these documents could very properly have been added to our present canon.

He probably wrote more explanation and testimony of the Bible than any other man in our dispensation. He said there are two seals on the Bible, the first is a seal of ignorance, the second a seal of intellectuality. Joseph Smith and the revelations of the restoration removed those seals.

He defended the lectures on faith and said of the fifth lecture “in my judgment, it is the most comprehensive, intelligent, inspired utterance that now exist in the English language - that exists in one place defining comment interpreting, expounding, announcing, and testifying what kind of being God is. It was written by the power of the

Holy Ghost, by the spirit of inspiration. It is, in effect, eternal scripture; it is true."

They used to teach the gospel in a way where they would hold up the Bible and say here's the prophecy that is fulfilled in the Book of Mormon. But that is not the Lord's way of teaching the gospel. The fact is not that the Bible proves The Book of Mormon is true, but that the Book of Mormon proves the Bible is true. It's true that passages like Isaiah 29 and Ezekiel 37 and Psalm 85 and John's statement about the "other sheep" all refer to the Book of Mormon, but that's not the point.

McConkie said, "I don't think there's anyone in the world who believes more of what's in the bible, or who has attempted to study it more and figure out what is involved in numerous passages, then I have, I have unbounded appreciation and respect for the biblical word, as far as what I have had occasion to write about is concerned. I've written more about the bible, 100 times over, then I have about the Book of Mormon. However, I have used the Book of Mormon for the purpose of interpreting what's in the bible."

McConkie said "in no single passage does the bible give all the facts about what it's talking about. It just doesn't do it. We sometimes have the idea that things get translated and that the translation is what the Lord originally revealed. That isn't quite right. There is more than one translation for some passages, and both translations are correct." One translation can have a lesser meaning and another translation can have a much higher meaning, and the Elijah passage as quoted by Moroni is a higher version.

Elder McConkie said having **Jesus as the first discussion sounded like a nice thing to do but it was wrong**. Every year they were selling more than a million copies of the Book of Mormon but when they changed the first discussion to not be about the restoration, immediately the very first year sales of the copy of the book Mormon dropped 500,000 and we've gone on like that. They were in the process of putting the Book of Mormon back where it should be. Contrary to what a lot of well-meaning people may think, people don't get converted to the church when they show them what we have in common with them. If we just show them that we are Christians we will never

convert anybody. If we just say we believe in Christ, they say that's nice we're not interested in any more discussion. The reason people join the church is the differences between us and the world, the personal God versus their spirit essence, gifts of the Spirit and Revelation against their sealed heaven, etc.

No one can discover the meaning of Romans (etc.) until they've read the Book of Mormon and Latter-Day Revelation to interpret the New Testament. Bruce read the Old Testament as if Mormon or Moroni had translated it.

The great doctrinal labor of the last hundred years has been to grow up into the revelations received by the prophet Joseph Smith. The heavens are not sealed but they are opened most readily to those who have faithfully built the house of their gospel understanding on the foundation that the Prophet Joseph laid.

Bruce taught more clearly than anyone in the 20th century the sonship of Christ, the Abrahamic covenant, and the doctrine of the gathering of Israel.

Note: Some disagree with Bruce's interpretation that the lost ten tribes are scattered rather than together, as Joseph taught they were together, and several scriptures say it. Perhaps its some of both. There was lots of pressure on the church to normalize.

Church leaders such as Harold B Lee, Spencer Kimball, and Bruce McConkie announced that the gathering place for saints is the same country where they live.

TESTIMONY & REFLECTIONS

Ch. 23 His Final Testimony

Bruce blessed a woman who had been paralyzed for years who was then able to walk.

He said life was never intended to be easy. We are here on probation. We are here to be tested to the

full extent of our power to withstand. He said “suffering sanctifies.”

Note: If your life is easy, consider what you must do to humble yourself. For example: are you casual about the word of wisdom? About independent finance? About your level of scriptural and doctrinal understanding? About your knowledge of history and science? Are you casual about the level of gospel teaching, missionary training and service exposure your children are receiving? Etc etc. Sometimes we must be humbled and learn that the way we are living is in fact far below how it could be, though the higher way is often a harder way.

He said it is pleasing to God when we fast and pray and seek His blessings, when we plead with all the energy of our souls for those things we so much desire.

There are major differences between other religions and the restored gospel, and those differences are what convert.

He said the Bible is a sealed book because of the seal of ignorance and the seal of intellectuality. and that it could only be unlocked by the spirit of revelation.

He said negative attitudes and feelings about the Joseph Smith translation are part of the devil's program to keep the word of truth from people and that these revealed changes made by Joseph Smith are as true as anything in the Book of Mormon or doctrine and covenants. He said we can't pick and choose which Revelations we will believe in use.

When he was very sick he was asked "what do you think Joseph Smith would have done about such and such." He said "I don't know but in a few weeks I'll ask him."

When he didn't have the strength to go to General Conference to speak he was asked how he was going to do it, he said "I don't know but I'm going to do it." He was given a blessing where it was said that he still had work to do, the devil was rebuked, and he was blessed with strength to get through the

conference.

He encouraged others to remember who they are and act accordingly.

It is final testimony he said he won't know any better than he knows now of Christ when he feels the marks in Christ's hands.

Ch. 24 Reflections of a Son

Bruce's mighty spiritual mentors were his father Oscar and his father-in-law Joseph Fielding Smith.

He said principles are eternal, procedures are man-made.

President Hinckley said Bruce was an Apostle with an understanding of what that meant.

Bruce had no hesitation saying "you can just quote me on that."

It didn't bother him when others made mistakes and he claimed the right to do so himself. He was never slow to accept correction or embrace new light.

People often quote Bruce's statement about priesthood, when it would be granted to the seed of Cain as he wrote in Mormon doctrine. Of this he said "I was wrong! It is a new day and we have new light. Disregard all that I or anyone else said previously." p421

Bruce helped the Joseph Smith Translation get into the LDS KJV bible, which the previous generation didn't have access to.

Note: 30% of the JST is in our bible, the rest can be found in the original Inspired Version of the bible which can be purchased here:

<https://store.truthseekersfoundation.com/product/inspired-bible/>

Elder Packer said that Bruce came to know 2 things as few mortals do: the law and the prophets.

No one is quoted more often than Bruce on doctrinal matters.

He finds time to write in evenings, holidays, and the occasional free time. He said “There is no such thing as maintaining continuity of thought or hope of project completion unless one maintains a rugged wearisome routine. There are many 12 hour days with an occasional 14-hour stretch thrown in for variety.” p423 He extended himself in every way he could to honor the office he held.

He never prayed about the girl he should marry, it was obvious.

He never prayed to know the truth of God, Christ, the restoration, Joseph Smith, etc, he knew these were true.

“I shall pray with the faith of Alma, repent with the determination of Paul. Write with the pen of Peter. Labor with the zeal of Moroni. Speak with the tongue of Aaron. Walk in the way of Jesus. Testify as did Joseph Smith. Submit to the divine will as did Job. Walk with God as did Enoch. Heal the sick as

did my father. Preach as did Nephi.” p427

President Packer said of Bruce’s work on the new edition of the scriptures, that it would result in a generation that will know the gospel and the Lord.

Would his sermons make people uncomfortable, irritated, incite critics, drive some learned investigator away, appear insensitive or overbearing? Was his purpose to make the world think well of the Church? When Bruce was tempted to change his message, the Spirit would withdraw a distance and there would come a deep loneliness known only to those who have enjoyed close association with the Spirit who then see it move away. He preferred critics contempt than to lose the Spirit.

President Hinckley said of Elder McConkie that he spoke with strength, beauty, a cultivated mind, and a sincere heart.

Elder Russel M Nelson said he feels that the extra year of life Elder McConkie got was to train him and Dallin Oaks.

He took time to shake hands with large audiences, lots of time, without being in a hurry.

His son Mark asked him if he liked being an Apostle. He said, “Yes. Now people listen to what I say.”

He taught that the Church is like a great caravan which moves on to its appointed course of the celestial city regardless of the difficulties and those who bother us on the way.

He taught us to covenant to walk in all the ordinances, keep the commandments and be witnesses of the truth.

His parting words to his wife were “carry on.”

A few assorted notes from the biography:

Zions camp march was 1500 miles

Revelations of the restored gospel are the key of knowledge.

Today we love the Joseph Smith Translation.

The book Millennial Messiah was based on scripture and shatters Mormon myths.

Note: I do say there is still a strong case that could be made, scripturally, for the ten tribes still being in a body. This is one of the things Elder McConkie said was not so in parts of his book. Many scattered? Yes. Some together still who have prophets & scriptures & will return together from “the north”? Yes. Many prophets such as President Joseph Fielding Smith and Elder James E Talmage have affirmed this fact.

We need the faith of the ancients, to believe what they did, and to live as they did.

Praise to the Lord Who Guided Theis Great Soul!

The world needs real heroes, and here is one of the best.

The fascinating biography of Bruce R. McConkie by his son Joseph Fielding McConkie is highlighted with added commentary.

This book illuminates some of the most fascinating stories of Bruce's life and teachings in a short, point-by-point format, making for a fun and easy read on the lives of one of the most interesting and influential figures in history.

Called to the Work

Elder McConkie said the best job in the world was to be a mission president. Preaching was what he loved. He wasn't a recreation-oriented father, but he taught his kids to love the scriptures, to love the church, to work hard, and be contributing members of society. He defended the church around the world, helped make our scriptures more understandable, was a prolific writer, and wasn't afraid to be bold about declaring the word of the Lord.

As Elder Boyd K Packer said, "If there ever was a man raised up unto a very purpose, if ever a man was prepared against a certain need - it was Bruce R. McConkie."

Elder Russel M Nelson said he feels that the extra year of life Elder McConkie got was to train him and Dallin Oaks.

Love him, hate him, perhaps you don't know him! Join in on this adventure to learn about one of the great saints of the last days!