

Finding Safety in Counsel
Henry B. Eyring, Apr. 2005

1. The Savior has always been the protector of those who would accept His protection. He has said more than once, “How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not” (3 Ne. 10:5)...
2. There seems to be no end to the Savior’s desire to lead us to safety. And there is constancy in the way He shows us the path. He calls by more than one means so that it will reach those willing to accept it. And those means always include sending the message by the mouths of His prophets whenever people have qualified to have the prophets of God among them. Those authorized servants are always charged with warning the people, telling them the way to safety.
3. When tensions ran high in northern Missouri in the fall of 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith called for all the Saints to gather to Far West for protection. Many were on isolated farms or in scattered settlements. He specifically counseled Jacob Haun, founder of a small settlement called Haun’s Mill. A record of that time includes this: “Brother Joseph had sent word by Haun, who owned the mill, to inform the brethren who were living there to leave and come to Far West, but Mr. Haun did not deliver the message” (Philo Dibble, in “Early Scenes in Church History,” in *Four Faith Promoting Classics* [1968], 90). Later, the Prophet Joseph recorded in his history: “Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took counsel. None had ever been killed who [had abided] by my counsel” (*History of the Church*, 5:137). Then the Prophet recorded the sad truth that innocent lives could have been saved at Haun’s Mill had his counsel been received and followed.
4. In our own time, we have been warned with counsel of where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in these general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. Each of us who has listened has heard President Kimball give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President Benson quote him, and we have heard President Hinckley quote them both. The Apostle Paul wrote that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor. 13:1). One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time.
5. Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. Those without faith may think that they hear only men seeking to exert influence for some selfish motive...
6. Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. The best time to have decided to help Noah build the ark was the first time he asked. Each time he asked after that, each failure to respond would have lessened sensitivity to the Spirit. And so each time his request would have seemed more foolish, until the rain came. And then it was too late.
7. Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm’s way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety. Along the path, I have found that the way had been prepared for me and the rough places made smooth. God led me to safety along a path which was prepared with loving care, sometimes prepared long before.
8. He knew that the Savior holds responsible those to whom He delegates priesthood keys. With those keys comes the power to give counsel that will show us the way to safety. Those with keys are responsible to warn even when their counsel might not be followed. Keys are delegated down a line which passes from the prophet through those responsible for ever smaller groups of members, closer and closer to families and to individuals. That is one of the ways by which the Lord makes a stake a place of safety. For instance, I have sat with my wife in a meeting of parents called by our bishop, our neighbor, so that he could warn us of spiritual dangers faced by our children.
9. I heard more than the voice of my wise friend. I heard a servant of Jesus Christ, with keys, meeting his responsibility to warn and passing to us, the parents, the responsibility to act. When we honor the keys of that priesthood channel by listening and giving heed, we tie ourselves to a lifeline which will not fail us in any storm.
10. Our Heavenly Father loves us. He sent His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. He knew that in mortality we would be in grave danger, the worst of it from the temptations of a terrible adversary. That is one of the reasons why the Savior has provided priesthood keys so that those with ears to hear and faith to obey could go to places of safety.
11. God offers us counsel not just for our own safety, but for the safety of His other children, whom we should love. There are few comforts so sweet as to know that we have been an instrument in the hands of God in leading someone else to safety. That blessing generally requires the faith to follow counsel when it is hard to do. An example from Church history is that of Reddick Newton Allred. He was one of the rescue party sent out by Brigham Young to bring in the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies. When a terrible storm hit, Captain Grant, captain of the rescue party, decided to leave some of the wagons by the Sweetwater River as he pressed ahead to find the handcart companies. With the blizzards

howling and the weather becoming life-threatening, two of the men left behind at the Sweetwater decided that it was foolish to stay. They thought that either the handcart companies had wintered over somewhere or had perished. They decided to return to the Salt Lake Valley and tried to persuade everyone else to do the same.

12. Reddick Allred refused to budge. Brigham had sent them out and his priesthood leader had told him to wait there. The others took several wagons, all filled with needed supplies, and started back. Even more tragic, each wagon they met coming out from Salt Lake they turned back as well. They turned back 77 wagons, returning all the way to Little Mountain, where President Young learned what was happening and turned them around again. When the Willie Company was finally found, and had made that heartrending pull up and over Rocky Ridge, it was Reddick Allred and his wagons that waited for them. (See Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* [1992], 29, 33–34.)...
13. Sometimes we will receive counsel that we cannot understand or that seems not to apply to us, even after careful prayer and thought. Don't discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful. In a world threatened by a famine of righteousness and spiritual starvation, we have been commanded to sustain the prophet. As we give heed to, uphold, and affirm prophetic word, we witness that we have the faith to humbly submit to the will, the wisdom, *and* the timing of the Lord.

Live according to the Words of the Prophets
Carol F. McConkie CR Oct. 2014

14. We heed prophetic word even when it may seem unreasonable, inconvenient, and uncomfortable. According to the world's standards, following the prophet may be unpopular, politically incorrect, or socially unacceptable. But following the prophet is always right.
15. The Lord honors and favors those who will heed prophetic direction.
16. The words of the prophets are like manna to our souls. When we partake, we are blessed, protected, and preserved both temporally and spiritually. When we feast upon their words, we learn how to come unto Christ and live.
17. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that through the prophets "the Lord reveals the truths of salvation, ... the salvation that is in Christ; and he charts ... the course leading to eternal life. ... In every age the Lord gives his people the direction they need at the moment of their peril and danger. And surely in the days ahead there will be times when nothing but the wisdom of God, descending from heaven and flowing forth from prophetic lips, will be able to save his people."¹⁷

18. For me, the words of prophets taught by my Laurel teacher gave me a vision of what a covenant marriage relationship should look like. The words of the prophets gave me the faith and hope that I could prepare for and obtain a happy home. Consistently studying the teachings of the prophets, both ancient and modern, sustained me during the strenuous and often exhausting years of bearing, teaching, and nurturing seven children. The words of the prophets in the scriptures and taught from this pulpit are words of comfort, love, strength, and good cheer that embrace us all.
19. When we heed the words of the prophets, we build our homes and our lives upon an eternally sure foundation, "the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, ... that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to ... misery and endless wo."¹⁸
20. We have a choice. We may choose to ignore, trifle with, trample upon, or rebel against the words of Christ spoken by His ordained servants. But the Savior taught that those who do so will be cut off from His covenant people.

Stay in the Boat and Hold On!
M. Russell Ballard, Oct. 2014

21. "I have discovered in my ministry that those who have become lost [and] confused are typically those who have most often ... forgotten that when the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve speak with a united voice, it is the voice of the Lord for that time. The Lord reminds us, 'Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same' [D&C 1:38]."⁵
22. In other words, they leave the Old Ship Zion—they fall away; they apostatize. Tragically, they often experience short-term and eventually long-term unintended consequences, not only for themselves but also for their families.
23. "I have heard that some people think the Church leaders live in a 'bubble.' What they forget is that we are men and women of experience, and we have lived our lives in so many places and worked with many people from different backgrounds. Our current assignments literally take us around the globe, where we meet the political, religious, business, and humanitarian leaders of the world. Although we have visited [leaders in] the White House in Washington, D.C., and leaders of nations [and religions] throughout the world, we have also visited the most humble [families and people] on earth. ...
24. "When you thoughtfully consider our lives and ministry, you will most likely agree that we see and experience the world in ways few others do. You will realize that we live less in a 'bubble' than most people. ...
25. "... There is something about the individual and combined wisdom of the [Church leaders] that should provide some comfort. We have experienced it all, including the consequences of different public laws and policies, disappointments, tragedies, and deaths in our own families. We are not out of touch with your lives.