

17 June 2023

What We Learned II

Dear Sisters and Elders,

What a marvelous experience we had last week to sit in the presence of Elder Gerrit W. Gong, an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. My heart soars at the joy I feel each time I reflect on the time we spent with this consecrated, humble, faithful, and diligent man.

On the Church website, we get a better understanding of the calling and service of an Apostle.

Apostle was the title Jesus gave to the Twelve whom He chose and ordained to be His closest followers and supporters. Apostles are chosen to be special witnesses of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus Christ called and sent His Apostles forth to represent Him, today's Apostles are given the role to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is the second-highest leadership body of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the First Presidency being the highest). Jesus Christ calls Apostles to represent Him in our day just as He did in the Bible. They leave behind their regular work lives and devote their life to full-time Church service. They oversee the growth of the global Church, and they travel the world to share God's love with His children and invite all to come unto Christ, learn, and follow Him.

Elder Gong was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on March 31, 2018. He was born in Redwood City, California, in 1953. He married Susan Lindsay in January 1980. They are the parents of four children and three grandchildren. He has served in numerous Church callings, including full-time missionary, seminary teacher, bishop, stake mission president, stake president and Area Seventy. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Asian and University Studies from Brigham Young University in 1977. In 1979, he received a Master of Philosophy degree and in 1981 a Doctorate in international relations from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

What does it mean to be a "special witness of Jesus Christ"? It means that he has had sacred spiritual experiences that have led him to know for himself that Jesus Christ lives and is the Son of God. This allows him to testify of Jesus Christ wherever in the world he is called to minister. On Monday the 12th of June 2023, that place was the Ghana Kumasi Mission.

Based on my own notes, those of the Mission Leadership Council, and those of missionaries in 5 of the 10 zones, I have compiled a list of what we learned in that meeting with Elder Gong. I felt it extremely important that I share this list with all of you. If you heard something more, I would love to have you share it with me in your weekly letter. I hope this experience will have as big an impact on you as it is having on me.

All My Love,
President Kunz

What We Learned from Elder Gong

- Start today and please take care of your companion. Asked us to be just like Elder Holland and Elder Cook who still love each other after many, many years.
- The more we read the Book of Mormon, the more we will love our companion. The same will be true when we marry our eternal companion (said by Elder Sosu, reinforced by Elder Gong)
- We need to recognize others' strengths more.
- Christ will never forget us so we should not forget Him. His love for us will be over our entire lives.
- Missionaries are called to a mission for their entire lives.
- Our covenants connect us to the Savior.
- Having a happy marriage is always the Lord's plan.
- Gratitude is a gateway virtue.
- The only way to happiness is thru righteousness.
- We should never call our Mission Leaders racist.
- We need to support our Mission Leaders.
- Treasures of heaven are right before our face, and often we do not recognize them.
- Don't ever forget how you once felt.
- We are saved by grace after all we can do. Said he learned love from the Savior.
- Work hard and work smart.
- We are called by God to fulfill prophecy (JSH 1:33)
- We don't go to the temple; we go to come unto the Lord and connect with Him.
- Christ is ministering personified.
- We have the same calling as the Apostles regarding missionary work.
- The Savior's marks are part of his perfection.
- The Key to HL HE is through the Savior.
- Satan always abandons his followers. The Savior is always with us.
- Your eternal companion will not be perfect (but then neither are we).
- Honesty to companion and mission President is expected.
- We are not called to an area, but to the people and to Mission Leaders.
- Without Christ-like attributes we can do nothing.
- Love has demands.
- Everything we do and everyone we meet is part of our calling. Missionaries need to know they are involved in a greater work!
- If we don't do this work, who will?
- Trials prepare us for something greater.
- We can be tired, but we should never get weary.
- We are called to serve God.
- When we come to the Lord, we become like Him.
- We should bring someone with us to the Temple.
- The size of the temple doesn't matter - the covenants are always the same size.
- Virtue brings the power of the Priesthood.
- The church is based on honesty.
- You are with your companion to learn something that you may not learn any other way.

- Gospel companionships always row together. This means both forward and upward.
- We are not only interested in your life as a missionary, but also who you will become when you go home.
- *Comment: It was a powerful personal encounter and a powerful example of 1:1 ministering.*
- *Comment: It was not just what Elder Gong said. The spirit changed when he came into the room.*