

Pieces of the Past

References

Introduction

Quote: Pieces of the Past.

“From our perspective in the present, the past is mostly gone. The people have passed away; their experiences have ended. However, pieces of the past remain—letters, diaries, records of organizations, material objects. Today, we can learn about the past only indirectly through the pieces that remain. Information is always lost between the past and the present. We must study the records that do survive while remembering that they do not represent the entirety of the past.

“... Because the past was different from our day, we must take special care not to make assumptions about the past based on our present ideas and values. We cannot assume that people in the past were just like us or that they would appreciate our culture or beliefs. We cannot assume that we now know everything, that we have read every source, or that our current understanding of the past will never change. Frequently, so-called problems with the past are actually just bad assumptions made in the present.”

—Keith A. Erikson, Church History Library Director, “Understanding Church History by Study and Faith,” *Ensign*, February 2017, pp. 57, 59.

Quote: Bridges between Generations.

“Family history builds bridges between the generations of our families. Bridges between generations are not built by accident. Each [of us] has the personal responsibility to be an eternal architect of this bridge for his or her own family. . . . Not one of my children has any recollection of my grandparents. If I want my children and grandchildren to know those who still live in my memory, then I must build the bridge between them. I alone am the link to the generations that stand on either side of me. It is my responsibility to knit their hearts

together through love and respect, even though they may never have known each other personally. My grandchildren will have no knowledge of their family’s history if I do nothing to preserve it for them. That which I do not in some way record will be lost at my death, and that which I do not pass on to my posterity, they will never have. The work of gathering and sharing eternal family keepsakes is a personal responsibility. It cannot be passed off or given to another.”

—Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander, *Ensign*, May 1999, pp. 83–4

Quote: 1 Corinthians 12:4, 7–12, modified.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man [and woman] to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit **to do ordinance work for the dead**; to another **to serve as a temple worker** by the same Spirit;

9 To another **to write narrative history** by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of **publishing narrative history** by the same Spirit;

10 To another **to do indexing**; to another **to interview others for their history**; to another **to organize and preserve family history**; to another **to find records**; to another the interpretation of **records**;

11 But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man [and woman] severally as he will.

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

Finding “Pieces of the Past”

Quote: Priorities.

“So, I invite you to study prayerfully section 25 of the Doctrine and Covenants and discover what the Holy Ghost will teach you. Your personal spiritual endeavor will bring you joy as you gain, understand, and use the power with which you have been endowed.

“Part of this endeavor will require you to put aside many things of this world. Sometimes we speak almost casually about walking away from the world with its contention, pervasive temptations, and false philosophies. But truly doing so requires you to examine your life meticulously and regularly. As you do so, the Holy Ghost will prompt you about what is no longer needful, *what is no longer worthy of your time and energy.*” —Russell M. Nelson, “Spiritual Treasures,” *Ensign*, November 2019, p. 76, emphasis added.

Quote: D&C 9:7–9.

7 Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

8 But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

9 But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me.

Quote: 2 Nephi 28:30, emphasis added.

“For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men *line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts,

and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.”

Creating Pieces of the Present

Quote: Jacob 4:2–3.

2 “But whatsoever things we write upon anything save it be upon plates must perish and vanish away; but we can write a few words upon plates, which will give our children, and also our beloved brethren, a small degree of knowledge concerning us, or concerning their fathers—

3 “Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents.”

Quote: Abraham 1:31, emphasis added.

“. . . A knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, *and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.*”

Preserving the Pieces

Quote: Attributed to Mark Twain.

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.”

Presentation by Leon Johnson, “Pieces of the Past,” at the Burley Family History Expo, 10 February 2024.