

Ward Conference 2nd Hour Lesson - Fortune Cookies

Brothers and sisters,

Today you're each receiving a fortune cookie. And while that might feel a little unusual for church there's a purpose behind it. Most of us have probably opened a lot of fortune cookies in our lives. Most of them say things like, "You will have a pleasant surprise", which usually means more delicious Chinese food later!! But today's messages are different. They are inspired by recent General Conference teachings from Elder Cook, Elder Gong, and Elder Stevenson and they are meant to guide us as a stake. Because if we could summarize the future of the Hurricane Sky Mountain Stake in one sentence, it would be this – we are becoming a place where no one sits alone. We minister to all in the Savior's way.

As many of you have noticed, our stake is growing. It's growing fast! New neighborhoods, new families, new members and many who are still finding their place. Which means, as Paul said to the Corinthians, more "diversities of gifts but the same Spirit." And while growth is a tremendous blessing, it also brings a very important question. As we grow bigger, will we still feel smaller? Will people still feel known, needed and remembered? Or will it become easier for someone to quietly come and quietly leave unnoticed?

Elder Gerrit W. Gong taught the Lord's pattern: "No one sits alone - spiritually or emotionally." Elder Quentin L. Cook taught: "Wrap your arms around these precious, elect people." And Elder Stevenson reminded us that the most sacred moments in our lives - the "days never to be forgotten" often come because someone reached out. That is the Lord's pattern. Not just gathering people. But connecting them.

In fast-growing areas like ours, it actually becomes easier—not harder—for people to feel alone. New members may not know anyone. Longtime members may feel lost in the crowd. Same with our non-member soon to be friends Some may be struggling quietly. And the truth is no program, no building, no schedule can solve that alone. Only people can. Only you can, with the Lord's help.

So today, your fortune cookie isn't just a message. It's an assignment and invitation. If your fortune says: "Say hello and sit with someone" or "Make room for all" or "No one sits alone," that's not coincidence. That may be the Spirit saying, "...start there..." and do it today. Not next week. Not when it's convenient. Today.

One of the fortunes says: "Maybe the person we sit next to may become our best fortune cookie friend." That might make you smile but it's more true than we think. Because Zion is built in very simple ways... a seat saved... a name remembered... a conversation started. And suddenly, what could have been an ordinary Sunday becomes one of those days never to be forgotten.

Brothers and sisters, the stake presidency feels strongly that this is where the Lord is leading us. Yes, we are growing. Yes, there are logistical challenges. But more importantly, we are being invited to become a people who see each other. We're invited to be a stake where no one sits

alone physically, no one sits alone emotionally and no one sits alone spiritually. If we become that kind of people, everything else will fall into place.

So as you open your fortune cookie today, we invite you to do one simple thing. Act on it. Because the future of this stake is not just in buildings, boundaries, or numbers. It's in moments. Moments where someone feels "I belong here." "Someone noticed me." "I'm not alone." And that moment might start with you.

May our Heavenly Father bless each of you. You are loved. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.