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## **“Finding Peace in a World of Conflict”**

Introduction by Dale Cressman

Good morning. Twenty eight years ago I had the good pleasure to meet Art Rascon in the basement of this very building. He had returned from a study abroad in Madrid Spain and was busy building his career, as all of us were, down in the KBYU newsroom. Although clearly smart and talented, Art was not one to bring attention to himself; he was quiet, well-mannered and just really a nice guy. I’ve often wondered if he knew then that his preparations in our little newsroom would take him to every state of this country, around the world, and into the homes of millions of television viewers.

From BYU, Art launched his career in Texas, in Abilene, El Paso and San Antonio, and from there he and his family moved to Los Angeles where he reported for the ABC owned and operated station, KABC. In that capacity, he reported on the O.J. Simpson case, the Rodney King beating and subsequent riots and the deadly Branch Davidian standoff in Waco Texas. His reporting gained the attention of CBS news in New York, and in 1994 the network hired Art to report for the CBS evening news. As a CBS news correspondent, he covered the Oklahoma City bombing, numerous conflicts and disasters in Central America, the Caribbean, and the southeastern United States.

When I was a producer, he graciously provided my broadcast with a live report, in the aftermath of a devastating Florida hurricane. Only when he appeared on the control room monitors did we see that he was wearing a sling. He hadn’t mentioned that he was injured hours before when parts of a flooded home collapsed on top of him. Nevertheless he flawlessly delivered his report, even without the benefit of having a mixed-minus feed in his earpiece.

Whether reporting on a natural disaster, a terrorist attack, presidential elections or acts of war, Art has been there. 65 countries in all, including hotspots like Iraq, Israel, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and a host of countries in Latin America. He has calmly delivered on camera reports in the middle of fire fights in the Middle East. He has interviewed such notorious figures as Manuel Noriega, Daniel Ortega, and beloved figures such as Gordon B. Hinckley. His work has been recognized with 19 Emmy awards, two Edward R. Murrow Awards, and numerous other national journalism prizes. The National Hispanic Business Magazine named him one of the hundred most influential Hispanics in America.

In 2007, he published an inspiring and engaging account of his adventures; the book is titled *The Heart of News*.

## Honored Alumni: Art Rascon

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Born in El Paso Texas, but raised in Denver Colorado, Art attended what is now BYU Idaho before coming to this campus. He served a mission and married his sweetheart, Patty Thomas, a performer in the young ambassadors. Art says Patty is his angel of support and comfort. Today Art and Patty live in Houston. He anchors the 5 o'clock new for the ABC station there, and continues his award-winning reporting, and serves as second counselor in his stake presidency. Together, Art and Patty have 6 wonderful children, all of whom have, or plan to be, BYU alumni. I can authoritatively tell you, the Rascons have raised wonderful children, because we have had the pleasure of working with two of their sons in the department of communications. Jacob and Matthew are following in their father's footsteps and are truly two of the finest young men I've ever met. Thus it was no surprise when I learned that in 2010. Art was named Houston's Father of the Year. I don't know about you, but probably Patty deserves to be mother of the year every year. Art is a proud alumnus that is happy to tell anyone he meets that BYU is his home of learning and the foundation of his professional and personal life. Please join me in congratulating and warmly welcoming our college's honored alumni speaker, Art Rascon.

### **Art Rascon: (4:05)**

Thank you Dale, that was very kind and too long, (just kidding.) It is an absolute pleasure to be here, when I come here, I feel at home because this is such a beautiful and a wonderful college. This is the preeminent college in communications really throughout the world. It is one of the greatest, and the product that comes out of here is simply tremendous. What you are able to gain here at this university far exceeds anything you would get at any other university, and I'll talk about that in just a minute.

As we were walking over here to the HFAC building, where I spent many, many years studying 29, 28 years ago. We were walking by the Brigham Young University statue, which is just right there near the administration building. My wife stopped me and said,

“Do you remember what happened here?”

And I said “No.”

She said, “This is where we had our first kiss.”

And then I do remember! The reason I remember it is because it was during the summer in June of 1985, and we were courting for two days. About that- we had known each other actually for quite a long time, because we met at the former ricks college, I went on my mission, we didn't really keep in contact, we re-met here, we started dating, and were walking side by side through that courtyard area next

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to administration building. I remember Patty saying to me, "Do you mind if I take your arm?" And I thought to myself, "wow, she's pretty bold." So I said, "No, no problem."

So she took my arm and we walked arm in arm and we sat right there at the foot of the Brigham Young statue. She reminded me of a really corny phrase that I told her at that time, which was simply- now I forgot it. Oh ok, she's right there, she's always whispering things in my ear. It was "Some things are more important than journalism," and then I gave her a kiss. Then there were some EFY students on the campus at the time and they erupted into cheers, and laughter, and clapping, so I kissed her again. Then four days later as we were walking around her neighborhood hand in hand, we were at a street corner and were talking about a number of other things, I don't even remember what, but I interrupted my own sentence and I said, "Would you marry me?" And she looked at me and said, "What? Um..." She didn't know what to say so she gave me a hug, then she said, "I'll pray about it." And I looked at her said, "I'll do the same."

Then that was it. Two weeks later we just started planning the marriage, and I never re-asked, she never said yes, and four weeks later after that we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. Then we started to have children. Abilene we had a child, El Paso we had a child, San Antonio we had a child, Los Angeles, we had a child. (We were there for five years so we had a couple of children), Miami we had a child. Came to Houston and I said, "We have to stop moving, we keep having children, I don't know what's going' on."

But therein began our life and my life as a journalist. As I look back on 28 year of covering the world, I can only sat this: that I have learned more than any other time, and I understand more clearly now how God is in control of our lives, and how much dependence we need to play upon God. How much we need to be open to his clarity through the Spirit of what we need to do to be happy, of what we need to do to succeed, of those things which we need to involve ourselves in, so that we understand there is place for us out there.

Now, when I was working for CBS news, I was working for Dan Rather at the time in about 1996. I decided to do a story about the emerging internet and website craze that was happening among religious organizations. Religious organizations were getting on board with cyberspace and creating their own websites, and using this as an avenue to preach to the world and get their understanding to the world, this was back in the mid-90s. So I thought when I was working with CBS, I'll go ahead and interview someone from the LDS church, might as well. One of the great joys of being able to work in the business: you get to choose whom you want to interview, what you want to say, and in my 28 years of covering the

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word and reporting on it, I have never been told what to say, what to write, how to present the story. So there is a tremendous amount of liberty that is given to the journalist. And so I went to salt lake and I interviewed Elder Henry B. Eyring. **10:05** And prior to the interview, we had had about ten minutes to where we were able to just sit in a private room, and talk. At the time I had been working for CBS news, I was traveling extensively, I was always on the road and had this mind set of wondering, "Is this something I want to continue doing? Perhaps I want to leave and get into a public relations area or work for a company where we don't have to work 24/7."

And so I decided to present that question to Elder Eyring, simply asking him, "You know, I've been thinking about getting out of the business, and doing something else." And he looked me in the eye and he said, "Don't do it. You stay right there where you are." And that's coming from a prophet, so you tend to listen. And I said, "Why?" And he said "Because of this simple reason," he said. "And it's not a simple one." He said,

"In the decades to come, the fields of choice that will have the greatest influence upon the lives of everyone, everywhere throughout the world, are going to be in the fields of communication and education. You need to stay with what you're doing to help that influence increase and succeed."

And as I have traveled and covered these variety of stories, I have understood more of what he has had to say, and how communications, and I'm talking advertising, public relations, and journalism and anything to do with the dissemination of information out to the public, that indeed communications has the greatest and most profound effect on people throughout the world.

And what are we doing in our lives to ensure that that is at a level and is bent to a degree where it can help influence the lives of people for good, and not for evil? Because we know who's in control of this world. We know that Satan is, and we need to be the presenters of that good information. So what will be our legacy? What do we need to do?

We look back on the freedoms of this great land, and as I travel to other countries and understanding more clearly, it is the dissemination of information which allows a county to live in liberty, or live under dictatorship. Because what do we see around the world from those countries which are under tranny? A lack of something critical that is written right there in our First Amendment, and that is the freedom of speech. The freedom of assembly, the freedom of the press, the freedom of religion. Adopted in 1791, just years after the Constitution was adopted, and there we have the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment granting this tremendous opportunity of the freedoms which we enjoy, and that is the opportunity to speak our mind.

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What did we see in the Arab Spring uprising, when dictatorships began to fall throughout the Middle East, Egypt, and Tunisia, and Yemen and other countries? It all started from a tweet, it all started from social media, it all started with this dissemination of information that they did not have prior to that. And once we have an understanding of what the press can do, and as ugly as it might seem at times, and as bickering as it might be, and as awful as we sometimes see the evening news, regardless of what station we might be watching, either cable or mainstream, and it exists out there and they're all fighting against each other and we get an onslaught of news: I am grateful that it exists. I am grateful that we live in a land where we have the opportunity to have the freedom of the press. Because it provides a bit more checks and balances against a country.

And when John Adams stood in 1776, right there in the Continental Congress, and speaking to the members, the delegate members in 1776, trying to proclaim independence and trying to persuade them to believe in something like independence, what did he say? He spoke for 2 hours, without any notes. And these are among the words he said, "We are in the midst of a revolution, the most complete, and unexpected and remarkable of any revolution in the history of mankind, and the lives and liberty of millions of people now stand before us. So what are we going to do about it?" And so they committed the greatest act of treason in going against the British government and their massive forces and a ragtag army of American troops. How would that ever be possible? But yet it succeeded because of the great gifts of God, and the divine nature of this country. Now we understand the Renaissance, and we understand the Reformation, which was driven spiritually, and we understand the Revolution. But what happened after that comes the Restoration.

If there is something that we can remember, then that is the importance of the great freedoms which we enjoy. Because what singular pamphlet, and article, and dissemination of information ignited the ragtag American troops, and the colonists at that time? It was something that Thomas Paine wrote, that great writer in the Early Revolutionary period, *Common Sense*, and before that he wrote an article called "The Crisis," which simply stated, during George Washington's time of him attempting to gather his troops and go against the British forces, he was suffering. Those British forces were huge, how was this group of 15,000 men going up against this army of hundreds of thousands potentially?

So it was the dissemination of information and the freedom to do that, that Thomas Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country. But those who stand it now deserve the thanks and gratitude of every man, woman and child out there." Tyranny, like hell, is not easily defeated. And so that alone, that

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pamphlet, that writing, from Thomas Paine ignited the troops into a fervor of we can do this, and we can win. And indeed they did, and I am grateful for it.

So what will be our legacy? How will we move forward in this great triumph of the freedoms which we enjoy? And what will be our footprint in our lives today? As I think of that, I think of recovering Virginia Tech, and the massacre that took place there. And perhaps you might be familiar with that or at least read about it. Awful, the whole situation in Virginia Tech University. Thirty-two students were killed by a mad man who roamed the college campus. Thirty-two students he killed, then himself. And I went to there to report on it immediately, what an awful, ugly, deadly scene. The one thing that I remember from reporting on that, is after I would finish my reports for LA, and Chicago, and all the ABC's stations, it was about 1 o'clock in the morning and I would just walk the area of the campus. And there on the campus would be a large, makeshift memorial that was set up: walls that were erected, and all these beautiful notes that were placed on the walls, memories of the various students that passed away. And as I read all of these notes there was a common thread that existed among many of them. And many of the names were just the same. Thank you Debra for all of your love, for all of your kindness, thank you Debra, for picking up the books when I dropped them that one day. Thank you Debra for doing this for me and being such a wonderful roommate. Again, and again, and again I read this, and the same words being expressed for other individuals there. Like David, and Rich. And I remember one that simply said "Thank you for all the great times we spent together, it was awesome. I know that heaven will be a better place with you there. Love, your dad."

And so all of these notes give me opportunity to ponder and think. And whenever I cover a story, I try to walk away from it thinking, "What can I do in my life, to better myself to be like that father, who enjoyed so much time with his sons?" Or to be like that person who was really an influence for good in the lives of other people, who really did a swell job. And as I think of these experiences which occurred over time, I always try and say "Ok, what can I do now, to make sure that my life is leading in that direction." And in doing so I would offer this bit of advice, and the first bit was, understand that God is in control, that he is the commander of this life. If we put our faith and trust in him, he will guide us in those steps that we need to follow.

The second is this: live by the Spirit. Understand that in order to have these experiences in whatever career you're getting involved in, and when it comes to communications there are so many tremendous careers out there, but all of them have the opportunity to affect and influence the lives of so many people. And so you must always be open to the direction of the Spirit. Because I don't know how many countless times I've been asked my co-workers and other people, why should we do this? Because

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I'm the leader of the group when I go out, the leader of the producer, the associate producer, the camera crew, the soundman, when we head out to cover a story. And I'll never forget when we were in Iraq, I went through one photographer, he was there for a couple of weeks already and he was tired of it and he got out, and then the next photographer came in and he simply said this to me, he said, "Art, you need to promise me one thing." And I said, "What is that, Benjamin?" He was Jewish, not a good place to be when you're in Iraq. I said, "What's that Benjamin?" He said, "You need to promise me that I will not be killed while here in Iraq." And I look at him and said "Ok Benjamin, I promise you, you will not be killed while you are in Iraq." And he said "Ok that's good enough, lets go." And so we left.

And so we're going through the streets and we were not embedded with a certain army force, with a certain troop, either with the British or the American forces. We had a roaming pass, we could go anywhere we wanted to go. This was during the heat of battle when cities and individuals were being bombed and killed, and it was an active warzone. So we would travel down the street and we would come to a fork in the road, and I would stop, and I would think, "Which direction should I go, left or right," and I said, "I think we need to go left." And the photographer and the other crew look at me and say "Why? Why do you think that we need to go left?" And I say "Because this morning, I had a prayer, and I asked and pleaded for the direction of the Spirit of the Lord to guide our steps today so that we would be safe, and I think that's where we need to go." And he says, "Ok that's good enough for me, let's go." So we go.

And then once, like a couple of weeks after Benjamin arrived, we're travelling down this road and suddenly there's a roadblock right in front of us that is erected, and there are large cement barricades on both sides, and there about three cars in front of us you have these hooded, fettling soldiers from Saddam Hussein's army, that are out there and all you can see are their eyes, and they carry AK47 and they block the road. And my photographer just goes berserk, he just starts freaking out, (I know that's not a word that we should use). He just starts going berserk, and he says "You promised me, there's no way I can get killed here." Because he can see clearly three vehicles in front of us, they are yanking people out of vehicles at that point, and there is no way for me to escape. I can go backward, I can't go sideways, I can't go forward. And he's telling me to just step on the gas and ram all the vehicles in front of us- that's not going to work. And he looked at me and he yelled at me "You promised me that we wouldn't get killed on this trip." And I looked at him and said "Yes Benjamin, I did. But I didn't promise you that you weren't going to get kidnapped."

He found very little laughter in that. And he just shrugged his shoulders and turned this head and I said, "Benjamin, we're going to be ok." I said, "I feel it, everything is going to be just fine." And so we moved forward, we rolled our windows down, they waved the AK-47s, pointed them at our heads, asked

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us a few questions in Arabic, we sort of responded in broken Arabic, and broken English, and everything else. They let us go, and we left. Benjamin didn't use to smoke before we got there, by the time we left he was smoking two packs a day. Sad I know. Because he had quit like a few years older. But what he could come to understand was that he felt, and he believed, that yes, there was some guidance there of the Spirit. He never joined the church or anything, but there had been a series of experiences with other photographers that had been similar. In fact I'll mention this one, from hurricane Katrina.

You're familiar with hurricane Katrina, that awful disaster that hit New Orleans. New Orleans lies below sea level, so naturally if you have the dikes that are broken, it's going to be flooded with water. And it was, and the hurricane destroyed some of the dikes and the levies, and New Orleans was flooded. So you have a city that was stranded within a city, and as well you have the outskirts of the city and everyone trying to leave and most of the homes being flooded. We made our way around there and lived out of a vehicle for two weeks. Being a journalist is not glamorous, as some people think. You're in trenches, you're in mud, you're in water, you're in situations that are no fun. But in this case we were sleeping on top of the vehicle, and every day we would go out there and wade in water and do our reports and as we did this, I recall we needing to get to Gulfport, Mississippi. So we left New Orleans, racing off to Gulfport, Mississippi and it was, like, 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning, and all the highways, they're all shut down and there's no police, there's down power lines everywhere -- going down the highway at about 70 miles an hour, it's a beach highway, no one else is on it, no lights anywhere. And suddenly I get the impression "Slow down, you need to slow down." So I let my foot off the gas, we immediately go from 70 to 50 to 40 and my photographer is like, "Come on Rascon, what are you doing? Why are you slowing down? Let's get moving!" I said "I don't know, it just doesn't feel right. Something's wrong." And so we slow down: 20, 10, 10, we come to full stop. Right there in the middle of the highway, and he said, "Rascon, what are you doing? Let's go, we have to get to Gulfport, Mississippi we have a live shot to do at 4 o'clock in the morning. We've gotta get moving." I said "No, it just doesn't feel right."

I get out of the car, I start walking down the highway. Just beyond the beam of the headlights, I see why we stopped. The entire freeway was washed away, and there was nothing but water below us. We would have gone over the edge, into the water, and we would have probably been lost forever, because no one was searching for people at that point. Especially not in that rural area. So I called the photographer, I'm standing right there at the edge looking into this ocean, and I said, "Hey Johnny, come here." Gets out of the car, "What Rascon? Come on let's go!" starts walking over, he stands right there at edge, and looks into the water, and looks at me, and says, "I'm glad you stopped." And then he said, "Why did you stop?" And I said, "Let me tell you." So I told him about the impressions. Now to this day, I work with this guy,

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and he's 65 years old, and he's getting ready to retire, and I tell him every day that he needs to become a member of the church, but he has yet to do it. And he said, "No Rascon, I think I'm ok. I think I'll make it." And I said, "But when you die, you're going to be taught anyway." And he said, "Well I'm just going to wait until that point."

Brothers and sisters, we live in a world that is filled with speculation, with problems, with confusion, with issues out there that are lost and getting people more and more lost every single day. What we need to understand is the importance of the Spirit working in our lives, in whatever we are doing. Because as it works within our lives, and we must understand that when we go off and seek for that job, and we have that job and wherever that job might take us, that that job and agency, public relations, journalism, is directly and should be directly related to everything you know, and love, and believe about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because that and therein lies the truth of what great things you can do. Because if there is something I have discovered, it is that God can make more of you than you can ever make of yourself. I never imagined, or dreamed, of myself in this position. Never. But I've had the opportunity to go places and work with individuals, live in cities that I never dreamt were possible. And it is because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives. You learn things, keep your mind open.

So we've talked about having understanding that God in control, living by the spirit- always as well, number three, live to understand. Have an open mind, be teachable, be the person who is going to be meek, and be a sponge to just absorb everything around you. I never really liked school in high school, I never really did, but I loved the opportunity to learn. Insatiably wanting to understand more about society, and life, and problems, and my curiosity level was always increasing. Have that among yourself. And be teachable.

The greatest opportunities have come when I have been the most teachable. And particularly once, I was in Central America, and this impression came to mind. In Tegucigalpa, covering the Pope--I used to cover Pope John Paul all the time and I would travel with him, and report on various cities, and when it was close to his death, we were out there interviewing various cardinals who could become the next pontiff. After this interview with this cardinal in Tegucigalpa, we found this young man, who was walking with us, this entire time while we were walking around the city. So I turned to him and I said, "What's your name?" And he said, "Marlo." I said, "Marlo, what's your story? Where do you live?" And I asked that question only because I knew that he looked homeless. And he said "I live over there, under that bridge. And I said how old are you Marlo?" And he said "17 years old." I said, "Let's go find and look where you live." So I took the camera, we followed him over there. Marlo showed us under the bridge, right there, cardboard boxes where he had been living.

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“How long have you lived here?” I said.

“7 years.”

“7 years? Under this bridge? Where’s your mom?”

“She went to America, she wanted to find a better life. She was going to send money, she was going to come back, she was going to get me. She never did.”

“Where’s your father?”

“He left a year later. He was going to do the same, but he never returned.”

Now, it is not unusual, because I have covered these stories many times, for parents to leave their children, there back in Central America, wherever it might be, in Latin American, and come to try to find a better life and eventually send money, or eventually try and return to get their children. That’s not unusual: I followed a 14 year-old boy once from Guatemala, all the way through Mexico and all the way to Los Angeles as he searched for his family, and finally found them in Los Angeles. So anyway, back to the story of Marlo. So I said “Marlo, how do you eat?” What do you do? He said, “Let me show you.”

And so we went to the back of the market right there in Tegucigalpa, and there at the end of the day, when all of the trash of the day was being emptied, there he scoured through it, along with the scavengers and all the dogs and the filthy animals of the day, right there, searching for food. Every single day. For 7 years, that what he’s done. We went and bought Marlo some clothes, we took him to a sandwich shop, and we said, “Marlo, pick whatever you want, get whatever you want to eat.” And so he got this big sandwich, and I got a big sandwich and several others got their sandwiches in my crew and we sat down and I lifted up the sandwich to take a bite and he said, “No no no, espera, espera- wait, wait. And I said “What’s wrong Marlo, aren’t you hungry?” And he said “Sí, sí, pero tenemos que orar.” We need to pray. I was serving as a bishop at the time, and that thought never crossed my mind. But Marlo remembered. So I said “Marlo, go ahead and pray.”

And he did. He said “Thank you God for this day, I thank you for this food, I thank you for life, I thank you for what I have, and I thank you for these gentlemen who have come. Amen.” And I couldn’t help but leave that prayer with tears in my eyes over the gratitude of this young man, who had so much gratitude, yet he had so little. He had absolutely nothing in his life, nothing but the clothes on his back. But yet he was more grateful than anyone I have ever seen. Understand that gifts come from God, be grateful for them.

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I once talked with Sam Walton. You may not know who Sam Walton is. Who here knows who Sam Walton is? Oh ok you're business students. No, you're smart, that's good. Alright, Sam Walton in the 80s was like the Bill Gates of the 90s, and the early 2000s. So Sam Walton in 1985, I was at my first job in Abilene Texas, and someone called and said "Hey Sam Walton is here visiting one of the Walmart's." Sam Walton created the Walmart, he was one of the wealthiest and most influential people in the entire country -- and in fact in the entire world. And so I caught up with him at the Walmart, rushed over there, I was expecting to find some man in an Armani suit flanked by others, and I walk up and I see some elderly gentleman in overalls, big boots and a hat. And I said, "Mr. Walton can I speak with you for a moment," and he said "Sure." So I asked to talk to him for five minutes. We had a great conversation. I said, "I have one more question Mr. Walton and that is this: what do you attribute your success to, anything in the world, what do you attribute your amazing success to?" And he said:

"Three things Art. Not in any particular order. Hard work, understand in this country you can make it, everyone can make it, if there's hard work, and good ethic. Number two, love of family, love of others. Lift everyone with you, understand that if you search (and this is my interpretation of it) understand that if you search for your own happiness, the rest of your life, only looking after yourself, you will never find it, and you will be more miserable. We seek to help others, we open our arms to others. We welcome them in, we allow others to be lifted as we move together. And you've heard the saying a thousand times, when a high tide comes, it lifts all boats. Be that high tide."

And then he said, "Number three, love of God. Understand that it takes more than you to make it happen. And that is a great principle that we need to follow." So I always remember that, thinking of the importance of that, because it's so critical today as well. Be an example, be an example. Follow the direction of the Spirit, understand that God is in control, and when I'm out there covering stories whatever they might be, always be open to the direction of the Spirit. Wherever I go, whether it be the Middle East or wherever, I understand that I try and be prayerful.

During the day, I generally will run into missionaries sometimes, just walking the street. It is such a joy to be able to run into missionaries.

"Where are you from?"

"Oh I'm from Utah."

That's the big answer. But they might be from other places as well throughout the country, throughout the United States. Sometimes I'll take down their name and their number. I'll say, "I'm going

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to call your family and let them know I talked to you.” Sometimes I’ll do that, sometimes I won’t, depends on what impressions I fell. I remember in Guatemala, I took down the names and numbers of a couple of elders, had lunch with them, had a wonderful time, a wonderful visit. My notebook pad, I have a thousand of them there on my desk, threw it on my desk, walked away, weeks went by, a couple of weeks at least. Suddenly, the impression while was sitting there at the desk, “Go call the missionaries mother.” I’m thinking, “Which one? I have a thousand notebooks here.” I start flipping through the notebooks, I find Elder Smith, and then a phone number, I find Elder Snow, and a phone number. Call “Elder Smith’s parents,” is the impression. So I call the number,

“Hello, is this Mrs. Smith, Sister Smith?

“Yes, it is, this is Sister Smith.”

“Hi, this is Brother Art Rascon, I’m a journalist, and I happened to be in Guatemala a couple of weeks ago. I was in this remote, mountainous village, middle of no where. I wanted to let you know that I ran into your son and I had lunch with him. And he is just doing wonderfully well, he’s doing great.”

And she started to cry, she said, “I have been waiting to hear from him, I didn’t get an email this week. I was not sure of what his situation was, and I was so worried and so nervous. Thank you for calling.”

She got her husband on the phone; we talked for a moment. They were happy and congratulatory over the opportunity of being able to hear what their son was doing and what he was up to. Follow the impressions of the Spirit. The Spirit will bring you life, will make sense out of so many thing that don’t make sense in this world, because as I said earlier, the world is just in a pit of trouble. The government is shut down, we have political problems everywhere, it is a nightmare out there. But yet it is America and we love it. And it will heal eventually itself, but not fully, because the world’s solutions and the solutions that America has for solving its problems will never work. Ok? What will work? And that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the solutions for all problems, and that’s a fact, because that’s what going to be eventually taking place when a theocracy exists in the world. And we have about 3 minutes, don’t we? Or less than that? Ok, it’s about time.

Alright, I will only leave you with my testimony. Which you have heard here this day. And that is that God knows you, and he loves you, and that each one of us can succeed and be better as we understand him more, and understand what it is we need to do in our lives to be a greater influence to others.

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One last quick story that takes 60 seconds. I remember in Iraq, going down the road and running into a herd of sheep, dozens of sheep, and this 15-16 year old shepherd that was walking all of these sheep everywhere. He was a Bedouin. You could have taken that picture back 2000 years, we went out there and we talked to him because we couldn't cross the road, his sheep where in the middle of the road. And then his friend comes by with about another dozen sheep, all of these sheep begin to mingle, and I'm thinking to myself, "These guys are going to have a tough time trying to separate all these sheep." Those shepherds out there, you are probably laughing at me. But I see all these sheep mingling together and I think "How are they ever going to separate them?" And at the end of our conversation I turn to the two 16 year old shepherds, I said "Alright I'm going to go ahead and leave you, I got to go, but I hope you're able to get out of this problem that you have here, because you have a hundred sheep all intermingled and how are you going to know who's sheep are whom?" And they sort of laugh, and the 16 year old says, "My sheep know me. And they hear me." And I immediately referred in my mind to this scripture, God knows us. The lord knows his sheep, but are we listening? That shepherd made a simple call, one simple call, and the sheep went one direction on one side of the road, and the other sheep went the other direction on the other side of the road. They separated in about 15 seconds, all those sheep.

God knows you, he loves you, he cares for you. I have recognized that more than anything else in my 28 years of covering conflicts, and seen it exist in the lives of so many people. I leave my testimony that God does live, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is his gospel, you are in the right place, having a foundation, being built right now that will provide the greatest strength for you in the future than you can ever have anywhere else. And I leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.