

It is so important that all of us understand that we live in the last dispensation of the fulness of time—that we are preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and that the adversary in these last days will be able to loose more evils upon the world. Our prayers are that all the youth of the Church will have the strength to withstand the fiery darts of the adversary and that we as parents and priesthood leaders—yes, we as the shepherds—can help our children remain true and faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I testify to the truthfulness of this work and the restoration of the priesthood in these latter days. I promise you that you will be blessed for your faithfulness and declare with the prophet Alma, “I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God” (Alma 7:22). That each Aaronic Priesthood holder will fulfill his duty to God and return with honor to his Heavenly Father is my prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

### Samuel's fulfillment of his duty to God

As a young man I was impressed with the Old Testament story of Samuel, whose life had been dedicated to God by his grateful mother, Hannah. While still a lad, he went to live and serve in the temple. One night he was called three times by the Lord and each time answered, “Here am I,”<sup>1</sup> thinking that he had been summoned by his high priest teacher, Eli. Wise Eli, knowing that little “Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him,”<sup>2</sup> understood that the Lord had called the young boy. He, therefore, taught Samuel how to respond, and when he was next called by the Lord, Samuel answered, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.”<sup>3</sup>

As we follow the life of Samuel, we recognize that he did fulfill his duty to God and that “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, Samuel himself became a great prophet and leader.

### Resources to help fulfill your duty to God

I hope you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood today understand that, as

Samuel, you also have a sacred duty to God. Samuel had a sainted mother, Hannah, and a great priesthood leader, Eli. Most of you young men, likewise, have wonderful parents and inspired priesthood leaders who care for you and stand ready to assist both you and your parents in your quest to fulfill your duty to God.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said this of you and your generation of young people:

“I have . . . great love for the young men and young women of this Church. . . . How we love you and pray constantly for the genius to help you. Your lives are filled with difficult decisions and with dreams and hopes and longings to find that which will bring you peace and happiness. . . .

“ . . . I make you a promise that God will not forsake you if you will walk in His paths with the guidance of His commandments.”<sup>5</sup>

With this promise of the prophet in mind, let me remind you, as was mentioned by Elder Hales and the letter from the First Presidency, of Church resources that are being made available to assist you in fulfilling your duty to God. The Aaronic Priesthood purposes help you to:

- Become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live its teachings.

- Serve faithfully in priesthood callings and fulfill the responsibilities of priesthood offices.

- Give meaningful service.

- Prepare and live worthily to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.

- Prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission.

- Obtain as much education as possible.

- Prepare to become a worthy husband and father.

- Give proper respect to women, girls, and children.

The Duty to God Award program will help you achieve these purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood. To qualify for the Duty to God Award, you will need to achieve and complete Aaronic Priesthood purposes; participate in family activities, specific quorum activities, and a Duty to God service project; keep a personal journal; and complete personal goals in each of four categories:

- Spiritual development

- Physical development

- Educational, personal, and career development

- Citizenship and social development

Where Scouting is available, you will note that many of the Scouting requirements can fill necessary expectations for the Duty to God Award. Both Duty to God and Scouting activities teach us to “be prepared” in “every needful thing.”<sup>6</sup> The Duty to God Award and the Eagle Scout Award (or a similar award) are complementary, not competitive.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve love you and desire to strengthen you in these increasingly difficult times. With this love and desire, they have provided for you a revised *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, as well as additional materials for Young Men, Young Women, parents, and leaders.

## Developing important characteristics

As you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood strive to achieve the Duty to God Award even as the Young Women work on their Personal Progress efforts, you will join with them in standing as witnesses of God as well. This witness is expressed by what you say and also by how you live and keep the commandments.

You know that receiving the Duty to God Award is not the ultimate goal in itself, but rather the incorporation into your lives of attributes that will help you focus more clearly on your duty to God. These characteristics will keep you on track to be worthy and able to meet the sacred tasks and opportunities before you. They will help you to be happy, clean, and strong now and also to prepare for eternally important events such as receiving the blessings of the holy temple, serving missions, and ultimately being sealed to a worthy companion in the house of the Lord.

Alma, as he taught in the land of Gideon, made this clear in timeless language: “And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.”<sup>7</sup>

You who have received the priesthood will wish to walk after this “holy order” to which you have been called and ordained. You recognize that with every promised blessing there are associated responsibilities. By fulfilling these responsibilities, you are given opportunities to serve others and develop yourself spiritually. These are essential steps in your progress to become more like Jesus.

## Jesus’ example in doing His duty to God

The Savior, who suffered all things for us,<sup>8</sup> faced challenges similar to some we face in our Aaronic Priesthood years.

You remember Jesus' experience at about the age when most of us become deacons. He had gone with His family and others to the temple. When it came time to return home, He was not with Mary and Joseph. They must have assumed that Jesus was with other trusted friends or extended family members. Only when His absence persisted did they become alarmed. As dutiful parents, Mary and Joseph did what your parents may have done in similar circumstances: they went looking for Him. When they located Jesus in the temple, only parents and grandparents might fully appreciate the mixed sense of relief they felt that He was safe, but they also were perhaps a little surprised by His reaction. Have any of you ever had a similar experience? We all know the dialogue that ensued:

"And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"<sup>9</sup>

Jesus might have said, "Don't you know that I am doing my duty to God?"

### **We are the Lord's agents, on His errand**

President Harold B. Lee taught that the meaning of Jesus' question is found in section 64 of the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>10</sup> Said President Lee:

"When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord's errand. That is what it means to magnify the priesthood. Think of the Master asking each of you, as this young boy did of Joseph and Mary, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Whatever you do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, holding the priesthood and doing your duty to God is not only a very serious responsibility but also a remarkable privilege.

Sometimes you might feel that your parents and leaders respond like Mary and Joseph did. After Jesus answered by asking His important question about His Father's business, Luke records, "They understood not the saying which he spake unto them."<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, please pay close attention to what Jesus did! It is an example for what we must do if we are really to fulfill our duty to God. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>13</sup>

You must remember that your duty to God is very clearly linked to your duties to your own family members, particularly your parents. It is in being properly subject or submissive not only to God, but also to parents and priesthood leaders, that we can truly fulfill our duty to God. May we all be as Samuel, who said to the Lord, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See 1 Samuel 3:4-8.
2. 1 Samuel 3:7.
3. 1 Samuel 3:10.
4. 1 Samuel 3:19.
5. "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 4, 6; or *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
7. Alma 7:22.
8. See Alma 7:11; Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
9. Luke 2:48-49.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
11. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
12. Luke 2:50.
13. Luke 2:51-52.
14. 1 Samuel 3:10.