

tudes, wondering if I was doing all that I might. Even though I had always accepted my Church assignments, I wondered if I was fulfilling them with all of my heart, might, mind, and soul and living up to the responsibility, the blessing, that I received as a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood and what would be expected of any of us who received this blessing.

Looking back on that sleepless night, I thank the Lord for His blessings today and for all that I have had the opportunity to be involved in. I try always to live the gospel to the fullest, to do everything I am called on to do with all of my heart, might, mind, and strength, to fulfill any call that might come to me so I may be qualified to do whatever I might be asked to do someday.

### **Resolve to live the way you should**

On this night when we are honoring the priesthood, you young men of the priesthood, resolve to live the way you

should. Don't be caught up in some of the silly things that are going on in the world, but bear in mind what has been given to you. I will repeat again, priesthood is the power and authority delegated to man by our Heavenly Father. The authority and the majesty of it are beyond our comprehension.

I bear you my witness, my testimony, that this work is true. I'm glad to be able, in the twilight of my life, to stand and bear witness of the truthfulness of the gospel, as I have witnessed it all the days of my life from my baptism on until the present time. I love the Lord. I love our Heavenly Father and this work. I bear witness to the truthfulness of this work.

And to all of you priesthood leaders, live as you should. We are different, and it is not good for you to be like everybody else because you hold the priesthood of God, with those great promises and blessings and expectations of you.

This work is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Daryl H. Garn

### **Preparing for basketball—and missions**

At a recent stake conference, a returned missionary spoke on the subject of preparing for missionary service. He used the analogy of a father saying to his son, "I will be happy when you play in your first basketball game so you can learn to dribble and shoot the basketball." He compared that example to a father saying to his son, "I will be happy when you go on your mission so you can learn to be a good person and teach the gospel." This analogy had a significant impact on me as I reflected on my life.

When I was a young boy, my greatest desire was to play basketball. Fortunately I had a father who was anxious to see that his son's desire was met. Dad and I would

practice the basics of passing and dribbling the basketball hour after hour in our small kitchen. I would listen to college basketball games on the radio and dream of playing college ball someday. Serving a mission was far from my mind at that time; consequently, I spent very little effort in missionary preparation.

In an attempt to ensure some balance in my life, my dad—who had not held a Church calling in many years—accepted the call to serve as my Scoutmaster. He operated by the book, and due to his diligence some of my friends and I became Eagle Scouts. I realize now that Scouting is great preparation for a mission.

My boyhood dream came true when I made the basketball team at Utah State University. During my second year at Utah

State, a returned missionary befriended me. Because of his example I began looking at my associates at school, including those on the basketball team, and realized that the people I most wanted to be like were those who had served missions. With the kind and loving mentoring of my good friend—and, I am sure, as a result of my mother's prayers and good example—my desires changed. After my second year at Utah State, I was called to serve in the Western Canadian Mission.

Three months into my mission, a new missionary from Idaho was assigned to be my companion. We had been together only a few days when I realized something very significant: my new companion knew the gospel, while I only knew the discussions. How I wished that I had prepared to be a missionary as hard as I had prepared to be a basketball player. My companion had prepared for his mission throughout his life and was immediately a valuable member of the team. How important it is for fathers and sons to work together on the basics in preparing for a mission.

I believe it is appropriate to compare the game of basketball to missionary work. The game of basketball includes not only the time you compete with another team on the court but also the hours of proper training and practice. The great work of saving souls is not limited to the two years that you serve a mission but, rather, requires years of righteous living and preparation in order to meet the standard for full-time missionary service.

### **Raising the standard for missionaries**

On January 11, 2003, as part of the worldwide leadership training broadcast, President Gordon B. Hinckley instructed priesthood leaders regarding missionary work. His remarks have caused each of us to reflect on our individual responsibility to share the gospel. President Hinckley said, "The time has come when we must raise the standards of those who are called

to serve as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world" ("Missionary Service," *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 17).

### *Early preparation of missionaries*

There are two aspects of raising the standard for missionary service that we would do well to consider. The first is early preparation of young men and women. In their letter introducing some modifications to the Young Men and Young Women programs, the First Presidency said, "As youth work on these goals, they will develop skills and attributes that will lead them to the temple and prepare them for a lifetime of service to their families and the Lord" (First Presidency letter, 28 Sept. 2001). Listen carefully to their words: "develop skills and attributes." As parents and leaders of youth, we need to help our young people identify these skills and attributes.

### *Personal worthiness of missionaries*

The second aspect is personal worthiness, which comes through keeping the commandments of God. Some young men have had the notion that they can break the commandments, confess to their bishops one year before they plan to go on a mission, and then be worthy to serve. The repentance process is far more than planned confession followed by a waiting period. We often hear this question of one who has transgressed: "How long will I have to wait before I can go on my mission?" Keep in mind that repentance is not simply a waiting game. The Savior said: "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 9:20).

Now is the time to kindle that fire. President Hinckley has said, "We simply cannot permit those who have not qualified themselves as to worthiness to go into

the world to speak the glad tidings of the gospel” (*First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 17). We now understand from the First Presidency’s statement on missionary work that there are transgressions that will disqualify young men and women from missionary service (see “Statement on Missionary Work” attached to First Presidency letter, 11 Dec. 2002).

President James E. Faust said: “There need to be some absolutes in life. There are some things that should not ever be done, some lines that should never be crossed, vows that should never be broken, words that should never be spoken, and thoughts that should never be entertained” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 74; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 48).

The bar for missionary service has been raised. “Those individuals not able to meet the physical, mental, and emotional demands of full-time missionary work are honorably excused. . . . They may be called to serve in other rewarding capacities” (“Statement on Missionary Work” attached to First Presidency letter, 11 Dec. 2002). We believe that by following the guidelines outlined by the First Presidency, there will be an increase in the number of full-time missionaries who are worthy and prepared to serve.

### Examples to follow

In sports we often have great athletes whom we admire, and we strive to develop skills to become like them. In our

spiritual lives we also have great examples to follow, the greatest being our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who responded to Thomas’s question, “How can we know the way?” (John 14:5).

The scriptures record Jesus saying, “I am the way” (John 14:6). In 2 Nephi we read: “Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?” (2 Nephi 31:10).

My young friends, there are many who are following “the way” of the Savior whom you can follow as your example as you prepare for missionary service. You will find them among your family, your friends, and your Church leaders. Even today I count as one of my greatest blessings those dear friends who set the proper example by following the Savior.

### Be the greatest generation of missionaries

It is my prayer that you young men will be diligent in your righteous desires, that you will be successful in all that you do, and that you will be, as Elder M. Russell Ballard has said, “the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47).

I testify, as President Hinckley recently said of missionary service, that “there is no greater work. There is no more important work” (*First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 21). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop H. David Burton

### And that’s the way it is

Good evening. I love to gather with bearers of the priesthood of God and enjoy the worldwide brotherhood we share and cherish. A special spirit arises from the expectation we will be instructed in

the plain and precious parts of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This evening my remarks will be directed to the young men of the Church. You who find yourselves in a different age category are welcome to listen.