

hear from Elder Monte J. Brough of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Faith of a little orphan boy

My dear brethren of the priesthood, though we are from many nations, we are, as Paul said, of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”¹ But the *strength* of the faith within each of us is developed individually, not as a group.

For example, think of the faith of a boy, about eight years of age, who was facing an emergency operation for acute appendicitis. As he lay on the operating table, he looked up at the surgeon and said, “Doctor, before you begin to operate, will you pray for me?”

The surgeon looked at the boy in amazement and said, “Why, I can’t pray for you.”

Then the little fellow said, “If you won’t pray for me, please wait while I pray for myself.” There on the operating table, the boy got on his knees, folded his hands, and began to pray. He said, “Heavenly Father, I am only a little orphan boy. I am awful sick, and these doctors are going to operate. Will you please help them that they will do it right? Heavenly Father, if you will make me well, I will be a good boy. Thank you for making me well.” He then lay on his back, looked up at the tear-filled eyes of the doctors and nurses, and said, “Now I am ready.”²

His physical recovery was complete, and his spiritual power was developing.

Develop power in the priesthood

You brethren are older and have had the priesthood conferred upon you. Your priesthood quorums provide opportunities for friendship, service, and learning.

But the responsibility to develop power in the priesthood is personal. Only as an individual can you develop a firm faith in God and a passion for personal prayer. Only as an individual can you keep the commandments of God. Only as an individual can you repent. Only as an individual can you qualify for the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. And when your wife is sealed to you, her power and potential will increase yours.

I belong to a wonderful priesthood quorum. We enjoy a precious brotherhood. We pray together; we serve together. We teach, love, and sustain one another. The Twelve come from different backgrounds—business, education, law, and science. But not one was called to serve because of that background. In fact, all men called to positions of priesthood responsibility are chosen because of who they are and who they can become.³

Throughout life you will have a wide variety of duties and responsibilities. Many of these are temporary and will be relinquished upon your release. (You probably won’t object to your release from a call to pull weeds at the welfare farm.) But you never will be released from responsibilities related to your personal and family development.

When ordained to an office in the priesthood, you are granted authority. But power comes from exercising that authority in righteousness.

Responsibility to the Lord

From the President of the Church to the newest deacon, we are responsible to the Lord. We are to be true and faithful

and live by every principle and doctrine that He has given to us. We cannot compromise a revelation or a commandment committed to our charge. He trusts us to “build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness.”⁴

One day each of us will give an account to the Lord.⁵ This awareness was evident in a serious conversation I had years ago with a dear friend facing the end of his mortal life. I asked him if he was ready to die. I’ll never forget his answer. With courage and conviction, he said, “My life is ready for inspection.”

When the Prophet Joseph Smith faced death, he said, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men.”⁶

Now is the time to prepare for your own ultimate interview. You might ask yourself, “Do I pay tithing with a willing heart? Do I obey the Word of Wisdom? Is my language free from obscenities and swearing? Am I morally righteous? Am I truly grateful for the Atonement, which makes my resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility? Do I honor temple covenants that seal loved ones to me forever?” If you can honestly say yes, you are developing power in the priesthood.

The gift of the Holy Ghost can add to that power. The scriptures tell of people who had received the Holy Ghost but did not know it.⁷ Don’t let that happen to you. Cultivate that gift and qualify for this promise from God: “Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men; For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.”⁸

Priesthood in this dispensation

Priesthood authority has existed in many dispensations, such as those of Adam, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Moses,

the meridian of time, the Jaredites, the Nephites, and others. All previous dispensations were limited in time, as each ended in apostasy. They were also limited to small segments of planet Earth. In contrast, our dispensation—the dispensation of the fullness of times—will not be limited in time or place. Globally, it will host a whole, complete, and perfect union, welding together dispensations, keys, powers, and glories from the days of Adam even to the present time.⁹

The Aaronic Priesthood was restored on May 15, 1829, by John the Baptist; the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored shortly thereafter by Peter, James, and John.¹⁰ Other heavenly messengers conveyed specific keys of the priesthood. Moroni held keys of the Book of Mormon.¹¹ Moses brought keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes.¹² Elias conveyed keys of the restoration of all things,¹³ including the Abrahamic covenant.¹⁴ And Elijah conferred keys of the sealing authority.¹⁵

Priesthood keys

You know something about keys. In your pocket there might be a key to your home or car. Priesthood keys, on the other hand, are intangible and invisible. They “switch on” the authority of the priesthood. Some keys even convey power to bind in heaven as well as on earth.¹⁶

Joseph Smith conferred priesthood keys upon all of the Twelve.¹⁷ Those keys have been transferred to successive leaders. Today President Gordon B. Hinckley holds authority for every restored key held by “all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation.”¹⁸

With this doctrinal history in mind, it is clear that one cannot buy the priesthood. Scripture declares that “no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”¹⁹

Magnify callings in the priesthood

To bear the priesthood means you have a personal responsibility to magnify your calling. Let each opportunity to serve help to develop your power in the priesthood. In your personal grooming, follow the example of the living prophets. Doing so gives silent expression that you truly comprehend the importance of “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.”²⁰

When you brethren have an opportunity to exercise the Melchizedek Priesthood, ponder what you are to do. When you lay hands upon the head of another, you are not offering a prayer, which of course requires no authority. You are authorized to set apart, to ordain, to bless, and to speak in the name of the Lord.²¹ Remember His promises: “Whomsoever you bless I will bless,”²² and “I will impart unto you of my Spirit, . . . and then shall ye know . . . all things . . . pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.”²³

Objectives for Aaronic Priesthood holders

To magnify your callings in the Aaronic Priesthood, you young men should shape your personal efforts toward five personal objectives to:

- Gain a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Be worthy of missionary service.
- Keep yourself morally clean and qualified to enter the holy temple.
- Pursue your personal education.
- Uphold Church standards and be worthy of your future companion.

How can you remember those five objectives? It’s easy. Look at your hand. Let your pointer finger point to the scriptures. From them gain a better knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then live in accord with His teachings. Let your middle finger remind you to be worthy of missionary service. Let your ring finger re-

mind you of marriage, endowment, sealing, and blessings of the temple. Let your end finger remind you that pursuit of an education is a religious responsibility.²⁴ Let your thumb go up, reminding you to uphold the standards of the Church and to be worthy of your eternal companion. The realization of these five objectives will bless your lives.

Honor and care for your wife

You bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood should qualify for the highest degree of celestial glory. “In order to obtain [it], a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.”²⁵

That covenant is honored when you honor your wife. A husband’s foremost priority should be the care of his wife. Be true to her. Don’t ever allow your eyes to gaze upon pornography or let your language be lewd. The very choices made by reason of agency limit one’s agency in the future. You cannot exercise agency and escape accountability and responsibility for each choice.

Use the priesthood righteously

Never forget that “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven. . . . [This power] cannot be controlled nor handled [except] upon the principles of righteousness.”²⁶ If we abuse that power to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, to pursue vain ambition, or to control others in any degree of unrighteousness, we lose both the authority and the power of the priesthood.²⁷

Brethren, serve with gentleness, long-suffering, kindness, meekness, love unfeigned, pure knowledge, and charity toward all.²⁸ Then the “doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon [your] soul as the dews from heaven.”²⁹

Please know of our love and gratitude for each of you. We thank you for your faith, your service, and your sustaining strength. May you, your loved ones, and your posterity be blessed by your righteous pursuit of power in the priesthood.

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. He directs His Church through His prophets and apostles. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ephesians 4:5.
2. See George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, comp. Preston Nibley (1948), 144–45.
3. See Matthew 20:16; 22:14; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 17:14; Alma 13:3, 6, 9; 3 Nephi 12:1; Doctrine and Covenants 3:10; 52:1; 95:5; 121:34, 40–46.
4. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
5. See Hebrews 13:17; Alma 5:18; 11:43; Doctrine and Covenants 72:13–16.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
7. See 3 Nephi 9:20.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
10. See Joseph Smith—History 1:72; Doctrine and Covenants 27:8, 12.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:5.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:6.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.
15. See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 337–38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 110:13–16; 128:21.
16. See Matthew 16:19; 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 124:93; 127:7; 128:8, 10; 132:46.
17. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:154–56.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 112:31; see also 128:18.
19. Hebrews 5:4.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 107:3; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3; Alma 13:1.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:20, 38; 84:19–22, 26–27; 107:18–20; 124:39–46; 133:6.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 11:13–14.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 131:2–3; second brackets are in the original.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
28. See 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.

Elder Monte J. Brough

I hold in my hand a copy of a Sunday School manual titled *Leaders of the Scriptures*, which was printed in 1947. The authors were Marion G. Merkley and Gordon B. Hinckley. Fifty-six years ago! This manual has been in my home for many years and is part of the motivation for this talk.

Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

One of the most significant events of the Restoration is that of the Aaronic Priesthood in May 1829. John the Baptist

appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Joseph recounts:

“While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”¹