

31. See Galatians 3:29.
 32. Abraham 2:11.
 33. "Friend to Friend," *Friend*, Sept. 1995, 7.
 34. Colin Powell, "Of Memory and Our Democracy," *USA Weekend*, May 2, 2004, Internet, <http://www.usaweekend.com>.

35. Doctrine and Covenants 84:80.
 36. Doctrine and Covenants 84:80.

The choir and congregation sang
 "Praise to the Man."

President Thomas S. Monson

Be anxiously engaged

My dear brethren, it is a solemn and somewhat humbling experience to stand before you this evening and respond to the invitation to teach and to testify concerning the sacred privilege which is ours to bear the priesthood of God. I pray for your faith and your prayers in my behalf.

Beyond those who hold the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood who are in attendance this evening here in this beautiful Conference Center or seated in locations worldwide, there are vast numbers of priesthood bearers who, for whatever reason, have drifted from their duties and have chosen to pursue other pathways.

The Lord speaks rather plainly to us to reach out and rescue such individuals and bring them and theirs to the table of the Lord. We well could pay heed to the Lord's divine instructions when He declared, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."¹ He added:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And in-

asmuch as men do good they shall in no-wise lose their reward."²

Jesus's example of doing good

The sacred scriptures provide for you and me a model to follow when they declare, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."³ And He "went about doing good, . . . for God was with him."⁴

I have observed in studying the life of the Master that His lasting lessons and His marvelous miracles usually occurred when He was doing His Father's work. On the way to Emmaus He appeared with a body of flesh and bones. He partook of food and testified of His divinity. All of this took place after He had exited the tomb.

At an earlier time, it was while He was on the road to Jericho that He restored sight to one who was blind.

The Savior was ever up and about—teaching, testifying, and saving others. Such is our individual duty as members of priesthood quorums today.

A plea to priesthood holders

In a proclamation of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued on April 6, 1980, this declaration of testimony and truth was set forth:

"We solemnly affirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in fact a restoration of the Church established by the Son of God, when in mortal-

ity he organized his work upon the earth; that it carries his sacred name, even the name of Jesus Christ; that it is built upon a foundation of Apostles and prophets, he being the chief cornerstone; that its priesthood, in both the Aaronic and Melchizedek orders, was restored under the hands of those who held it anciently: John the Baptist, in the case of the Aaronic; and Peter, James, and John in the case of the Melchizedek.”⁵

On October 6, 1889, President George Q. Cannon expressed this plea:

“I want to see the power of the Priesthood strengthened. . . . I want to see this strength and power diffused through the entire body of the Priesthood, reaching from the head down to the least and most humble deacon in the Church. Every man should seek for and enjoy the revelations of God, the light of heaven shining in his soul and giving unto him knowledge concerning his duties, concerning that portion of the work of God that devolves upon him in his Priesthood.”⁶

I share with you tonight two experiences from my life—one which took place when I was a boy and the other pertaining to a friend of mine who was a husband and father of children.

An adviser uses pigeons to teach

Not long after my ordination as a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, I was called to serve as president of the quorum. Our adviser, Harold, was interested in us, and we knew it. One day he said to me, “Tom, you enjoy raising pigeons, don’t you?”

I responded with a warm, “Yes.”

Then he proffered, “How would you like me to give you a pair of purebred Birmingham Roller pigeons?”

This time I answered, “Yes, Sir!” You see, the pigeons I had were just the common variety, trapped on the roof of the Grant Elementary School.

He invited me to come to his home the next evening. The following day was one of the longest in my young life. I was awaiting my adviser’s return from work an hour before he arrived home. He took me to his pigeon loft, which was in the upper area of a small barn located at the rear of his yard. As I looked at the most beautiful pigeons I had yet seen, he said, “Select any male, and I will give you a female which is different from any other pigeon in the world.” I made my selection. He then placed in my hand a tiny hen pigeon. I asked what made her so different. He responded, “Look carefully, and you’ll notice that she has but one eye.” Sure enough, one eye was missing, a cat having done the damage. “Take them home to your loft,” he counseled. “Keep them in for about 10 days, and then turn them out to see if they will remain at your place.”

I followed Harold’s instructions. Upon his release, the male pigeon strutted about the roof of the loft, then returned inside to eat. But the one-eyed female was gone in an instant. I called Harold and asked, “Did that one-eyed pigeon return to your loft?”

“Come on over,” he said, “and we’ll have a look.”

As we walked from his kitchen door to the loft, my adviser commented, “Tom, you are the president of the teachers quorum.” This, of course, I already knew. Then he added, “What are you going to do to activate Bob, who is a member of your quorum?”

I answered, “I’ll have him at quorum meeting this week.”

Then he reached up to a special nest and handed me the one-eyed pigeon. “Keep her in a few more days and try again.” This I did, and once more she disappeared. Again the experience: “Come on over, and we’ll see if she returned home.” Came the comment as we walked to the loft, “Congratulations on getting Bob to priesthood meeting. Now what

are you and Bob going to do to activate Bill?"

"We'll have him there next week," I volunteered.

This experience was repeated over and over again. I was a grown man before I fully realized that indeed Harold, my adviser, had given me a special pigeon, the only pigeon in his loft he knew would return every time she was released. It was his inspired way of having an ideal personal priesthood interview with the president of the teachers quorum every two weeks. I owe a lot to that one-eyed pigeon. I owe more to that quorum adviser. He had the patience and the skill to help me prepare for the responsibilities which lay ahead.

Fathers, grandfathers, we have an even greater responsibility to guide our precious sons and grandsons. They need our help; they need our encouragement; they need our example. It has been wisely said that our youth need fewer critics and more models to follow.

Shelley's miraculous change of heart

Now for the illustration pertaining to those men whose habits and lives include but little Church attendance or Church activity of any kind. The ranks of these prospective elders have grown larger. This is because of those younger boys of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums who are lost along the Aaronic Priesthood pathway and also those grown men who are baptized but do not persevere in activity and faith so that they might be ordained elders.

I not only reflect on the hearts and souls of such individual men, but also sorrow for their sweet wives and growing children. These men await a helping hand, an encouraging word, and a personal testimony of truth expressed from a heart filled with love and a desire to lift and to build.

Shelley, my friend, was such a person. His wife and children were fine members,

but all efforts to motivate him toward baptism and then priesthood blessings had failed miserably.

But then Shelley's mother died. Shelley was so sorrowful that he retired to a special room at the mortuary where the funeral was being held. We had wired the proceedings to this room so that he might mourn alone and where no one could see him weep with sorrow. As I comforted him in that room before going to the pulpit, he gave me a hug, and I knew a tender chord had been touched.

Time passed. Shelley and his family moved to another part of the city. I was called to preside over the Canadian Mission and, together with my family, moved to Toronto, Canada, for a three-year period.

When I returned and after I was called to the Twelve, Shelley telephoned me. He said, "Bishop, will you seal my wife, my family, and me in the Salt Lake Temple?"

I answered hesitantly, "But Shelley, you must first be baptized a member of the Church."

He laughed and responded, "Oh, I took care of that while you were in Canada. I sort of snuck up on you. There was this home teacher who called on us regularly and taught me the truths of the Church. He was a school crossing guard and helped the small children across the street each morning when they went to school and each afternoon when they went home. He asked me to help him. During the intervals when there was no child crossing, he gave me additional instruction pertaining to the Church."

I had the privilege to see this miracle with my own eyes and feel the joy with my heart and soul. The sealings were performed; a family was united. Shelley died not too long after this period. I had the privilege of speaking at his funeral services. I shall ever see, in memory's eye, the body of my friend Shelley lying in his casket, dressed in his temple clothing. I

readily admit the presence of tears—tears of gratitude, for the lost had been found.

Reasons for miraculous changes

Those who have felt the touch of the Master's hand somehow cannot explain the change which comes into their lives. There is a desire to live better, to serve faithfully, to walk humbly, and to be more like the Savior. Having received their spiritual eyesight and glimpsed the promises of eternity, they echo the words of the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."⁷

How can we account for these miracles? Why the upsurge of activity in men long dormant? The poet, speaking of death, wrote, "God . . . touch'd him, and he slept."⁸ I say, speaking of this new birth, "God touched them, and they awakened."

Two fundamental reasons largely account for these changes of attitudes, of habits, of actions.

First, men have been shown their eternal possibilities and have made the decision to achieve them. They cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once excellence is within their reach.

Second, other men and women and, yes, young people have followed the admonition of the Savior and have loved their neighbors as themselves and helped to bring their neighbors' dreams to fulfillment and their ambitions to realization.

The catalyst in this process has been the principle of love.

The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives. As He said to the dead Lazarus, so He says to you and to me, "Come forth."⁹ I add: Come forth from the despair of doubt. Come forth from the sorrow of sin. Come forth from the death of disbelief. Come forth to a newness of life.

As we do and direct our footsteps along the paths which Jesus walked, let us remember the testimony Jesus gave: "Be-

hold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and . . . life of the world."¹⁰ "I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father."¹¹

We must feed the hungry sheep

There are quorum members and those who should be our quorum members who require our help. John Milton wrote in his poem "Lycidas," "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."¹² The Lord Himself said to Ezekiel the prophet, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that . . . feed not the flock."¹³

My brethren of the priesthood, the task is ours. Let us remember and never forget, however, that such an undertaking is not insurmountable. Miracles are everywhere to be seen when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes. We are on the Lord's errand. We are entitled to the Lord's help. But we must try. From the play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: "If we don't try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

Let us, one and all, be doers of the word and not hearers only.¹⁴ Let us follow the example of our President, Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord's prophet.

May we, as did the Savior's followers of old, respond to the invitation, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."¹⁵ That we may do so is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28.
3. Luke 2:52.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, May 1980, 52–53.
6. *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, Oct. 29, 1889, 5.
7. John 9:25.

8. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, section 85, stanza 5, line 4.
9. John 11:43.
10. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.
12. “Lycidas,” line 125.
13. Ezekiel 34:2–3.
14. See James 1:22.
15. Matthew 4:19.

President Hinckley

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30

to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will follow immediately.

We express appreciation to the men of the Tabernacle Choir and the orchestra for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the session will conclude with the choir singing “The Spirit of God.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren, it is good to be with you in this very large priesthood meeting. I suppose this is the largest such gathering of priesthood ever assembled. What a contrast with the occasion described by Wilford Woodruff when all of the priesthood in all the world assembled in one room in Kirtland, Ohio, to receive instruction from the Prophet Joseph.

We have heard excellent counsel tonight, and I commend it to you.

The raging storm of pornography

As I offer concluding remarks I rather reluctantly speak to a theme that I have dealt with before. I do it in the spirit of the words of Alma, who said, “This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance” (Alma 29:9).

It is in that spirit that I speak to you tonight. What I have to say is not new. I have spoken on it before. The September issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines carry a talk I gave some years ago on the same subject. Brother Oaks has touched on it tonight.

While the matter of which I speak was a problem then, it is a much more serious

problem now. It grows increasingly worse. It is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. I speak of pornography in all of its manifestations. I do so because of letters that come to me from broken-hearted wives.

Pornography strangles a marriage

I should like to read portions of one received only a few days ago. I do so with the consent of the writer. I have deleted anything that might lead to disclosure of the parties concerned. I have exercised limited editorial liberty in the interest of clarity and flow of language. I quote now:

“Dear President Hinckley,

“My husband of 35 years died recently. . . . He had visited with our good bishop as quickly as he could after his most recent surgery. Then he came to me on that same evening to tell me he had been addicted to pornography. He needed me to forgive him [before he died]. He further said that he had grown tired of living a double life. [He had served in many important] Church callings while knowing [at the same time] that he was in the grips of this ‘other master.’