

the use of the priesthood through transgression. Later it was returned to him as part of the restoration of ordinances he obtained through full repentance. After the restoration, I turned to his wife and said, “Would you like a blessing?” She enthusiastically responded. Then I looked at the husband, now capable of using his priesthood, and said, “Would you like to give your wife a blessing?” Words cannot express the profound emotion of such an experience and the bonds of love, trust, and gratitude it created. You shouldn’t have to lose your priesthood to appreciate it more fully.

I know the immense joy and happiness that come from loving, cherishing, and respecting my precious wife with all my heart and soul. May your use of the priesthood and treatment of the important women in your life bring you the same satisfaction.

Be more productive with the priesthood

As one of the 15 Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, I express my own feelings regarding the priesthood as it has

been captured perfectly by this statement of President Howard W. Hunter:

“As special witnesses of our Savior, we have been given the awesome assignment to administer the affairs of his church and kingdom and to minister to his daughters and his sons wherever they are on the face of the earth. By reason of our call to testify, govern, and minister, it is required of us that despite age, infirmity, exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy, we do the work he has given us to do, to the last breath of our lives.”³

God will hold us accountable for how we treat His precious daughters. Therefore, let us treat them as He would wish to have them treated. I pray that the Lord will guide us to be more inspired, sensitive, and productive with the priesthood we hold, especially with His daughters. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
2. See Moses 4:17–19; 5:10–11.
3. Howard W. Hunter, “To the Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96.

Elder Jay E. Jensen

Arms of safety

I speak this evening about the Atonement of Jesus Christ and its relevance to the administration of the sacrament by the holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, taught so powerfully and so beautifully by Elder Oaks this morning. I will use a short scripture phrase that helps me visualize the Savior’s mercy. It is the phrase “arms of safety” (see Alma 34:16).

Secure in His arms

A family had been taking pictures on a lookout point of the North Rim of the

Grand Canyon. They heard screams and ran to find that a two-year-old girl had fallen through a railing to a ledge about 35 feet below. The little one tried to climb back up, but her movements caused her to slip even farther until she was 5 feet from a dangerous 200-foot drop.

A 19-year-old young man named Ian saw where she was and, using his emergency-response training, knew how to handle the situation. These are his words:

“Immediately, it all came at me, and I just knew what I had to do. I set down my camera and went up the trail a little ways where it wasn’t as steep, climbed over

the rail, scrambled down a bunch of rocks and through brush, and found her.' Holding her in his arms for an hour, Ian waited until emergency teams could drop down with ropes [to rescue them]" (in Patricia Auxier, "Save Her!" *New Era*, Sept. 2007, 7).

The phrase "holding her in his arms" caught my attention because the scriptures talk about arms—arms of love, arms of mercy, and arms of safety (see 2 Nephi 1:15; Mosiah 16:12; Alma 5:33; D&C 6:20; 29:1).

The scripture phrase "encircled in the arms of safety" comes from Amulek's message to the Zoramites about the infinite and eternal Atonement. He taught that the sacrifice of the Son of God made it possible for man to have faith in Christ to lead us to repent. "And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety" (Alma 34:16; see also verses 9–15).

Teach intangibles with tangibles

To better understand "arms of safety" it is important to remember that the Savior used tangible things, such as coins, seeds, sheep, loaves, fishes, and body parts to teach gospel principles.

Arms are tangible, and we use them to express affection and love. When I come home from the office, I am encircled in the tangible arms of my wife. I have experienced arms of love and safety throughout my service in Latin America by means of the common greeting, *un abrazo*, or hug.

As I have pondered how to effectively teach the Atonement to others, the phrase "arms of safety" has been useful. When we were baptized and received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, we received two ordinances that introduce us to the arms of safety. By coming humbly and fully repentant to sacrament meeting and worthily partaking of the sacrament, we may feel those arms again and again.

Likening a sacrament meeting to our day

The section heading to Doctrine and Covenants 110 gives the context for one of our most relevant verses about enjoying arms of safety. On a Sabbath day during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained that he and other priesthood holders had administered the sacrament to the Church.

Following this sacred ordinance, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery retired to pray in private. Following the prayer, the Savior appeared to these two men and said, "Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice" (D&C 110:5).

The sequence of events in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 parallels our day and is likened to us. Sabbath after Sabbath, you young priesthood holders administer the sacrament to the Saints, who come to sacrament meeting prayerfully, hungering for spiritual healing, hoping, pleading to hear in their minds and hearts these words:

"Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice" (D&C 110:5).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has testified that there is a spiritual cleansing or healing associated with the sacrament:

"The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. We are commanded to repent of our sins and to come to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament. In partaking of the bread, we witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments. When we comply with this covenant, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our baptism. We are made clean and can always have His Spirit to be with us" ("Special Witnesses of Christ," *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 13).

Implications for Aaronic Priesthood holders

To help members more fully receive that cleansing, or the arms of safety, those who hold keys to authorize and those who administer the sacrament should ensure that general guidelines in Church handbooks concerning the preparation, blessing, and passing of the sacrament are followed. Each priesthood holder should remember that he is acting on behalf of the Lord and be reverent and dignified. Generally speaking, our youth are exemplary. However, in the administration of the sacrament, occasionally we see a disturbing drift toward too much informality and casualness in dress and appearance.

Young men, before going to church, will you please pause before a mirror one more time and ask yourself if every aspect of your appearance is in order? Better still, invite someone you love, such as a parent, to look at you one more time, and if something is amiss, don't resent their counsel.

True servants of Jesus Christ are properly groomed and dressed, reflecting always His standards and not the worldly drift of casualness. Having every detail carefully attended to ensures that the Spirit of the Lord will be present. The dress or appearance of those administering the sacrament should not be a distraction for those who are earnestly seeking the blessings of the infinite Atonement.

A theme found in the messages of President Monson to us, the priesthood holders, is that it is a privilege to hold the priesthood: "It is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 60; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 57). I testify that this applies to the administration of the sacrament.

Experiencing the arms of safety

While serving as a bishop, I witnessed the blessings of the Atonement in the lives

of Church members who committed serious transgressions. As a judge in Israel, I listened to their confessions and, when needed, placed restrictions upon them, such as not partaking of the sacrament for a time.

A young single adult in our ward was dating a young woman. They allowed their affections to get out of control. He came to me for counsel and help. Based on what was confessed and the impressions of the Spirit to me, among other things, he was not permitted to partake of the sacrament for a time. We met regularly to ensure that repentance had happened, and after an appropriate time I authorized him to again partake of the sacrament.

As I sat on the stand in that sacrament meeting, my eyes were drawn to him as he now partook of the sacrament worthily. I witnessed arms of mercy, love, and safety encircling him as the healing of the Atonement warmed his soul and lifted his load, resulting in the promised forgiveness, peace, and happiness.

The Atonement—an ever-present power

I have experienced and have a witness of a truth that President Packer taught:

"For some reason we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to redemption from the Fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 28; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 23).

I love my Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I place my faith, my love, my loyalty, and my devotion in Them. I testify that God is our Heavenly Father and that we are His children. I bear witness that the Atonement is real and has

power in our lives. I testify that the restored gospel is true. These truths are found in the holy scriptures, especially

in the Book of Mormon. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder James J. Hamula

Fighting the war against evil

I speak tonight to my brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood. It is my desire to help you more deeply appreciate who you are, what your purpose in life is, and how you may succeed in accomplishing that purpose.

You have come into the world at a most significant time. We are entering the final stages of a great war. This war commenced before the foundations of the world and has been pursued with awful consequence throughout the world's history. I speak of the war between the followers of Christ and all those who deny Him as their God.¹

John the Revelator wrote concerning this war:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

“And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”²

It was Satan who instigated this pre-mortal war. He did so by rebelling against our Father's plan of salvation for His children and rejecting the Christ, who was designated to effectuate the plan. Tragically, a third of our Father's children followed Satan.³ Yet two-thirds did not. You, my young friends, were among these, and with them have come to earth to pursue the Father's plan of happiness.

Unfortunately, Satan's war did not end with his expulsion from heaven. As

John observed, Satan and his followers were “cast out into the earth”⁴ and have come here with “great wrath.”⁵ The evidence of their wrath can be seen in the blood and horror that has afflicted man from the beginning of time.

So profound and extensive have been the wounds suffered among men that God Himself wept as He surveyed man's condition.⁶

We now find ourselves in the last days of this earth's temporal history. In a coming day, our Father's Son will return to the earth from which He was rejected and reclaim it as His own.⁷ In that day, He will subdue Satan and his legions and usher in a thousand years of peace and righteousness.⁸ In anticipation of that day, God has restored His kingdom to the earth one last time. That kingdom is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁹

While God's kingdom has been established on the earth in times past, the people to whom the kingdom was previously committed were unable to keep it. This time, however, is different. The prophetic promise is that this time God's kingdom will not be lost but will overcome the world.¹⁰

You are the Lord's warriors

To ensure its ultimate success, the final restoration of God's kingdom has been commenced with unprecedented spiritual power¹¹ and is being sustained by that same spiritual power and something more. Reserved to come forth in these last days and labor for our Father and His Son are some of the most valiant and noble of our Father's sons and daughters. Their valiance and nobility were demonstrated in