

pioneers who made the courageous journey west. The spiritual journeys of today require no less hope or faith than those of the early pioneers. Our challenges may be different, but the struggles are just as great.

It is my prayer that our hopes will lead to the fulfillment of our righteous

dreams. I particularly pray our hope in the Atonement will strengthen our faith and charity and give us an eternal perspective of our future. May we all have this perfect brightness of hope, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Larry M. Gibson

### Watching over others

One of my sons, at age 12, decided to raise rabbits. We built cages and acquired one large male and two female rabbits from a neighbor. I had no idea what we were getting into. In a very short time, our shed was bursting with bunnies. Now that my son is grown, I must confess my amazement at how they were controlled—a neighbor’s dog occasionally got into the shed and thinned out the herd.

But my heart was touched as I saw my son and his brothers watch over and protect those rabbits. And now, as husbands and fathers, they are worthy priesthood holders who love, strengthen, and watch over their own families.

My feelings are tender as I observe you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood watching over, supporting, and strengthening those around you, including your families, members of your quorum, and many others. How I love you.

### A new deacons quorum president

Recently I watched as a 13-year-old young man was set apart as deacons quorum president. Afterward the bishop shook his hand and addressed him as “president,” explaining to the quorum members that he “addressed him as president to emphasize the sacredness of his calling. The deacons quorum president is one of only four people in the ward who hold keys of presidency. With those keys, he, with his counselors, will lead the quorum under the

inspiration of the Lord.” This bishop understood the power of a presidency led by a president who holds and exercises sacred priesthood keys. (See D&C 124:142–43.)

Later I asked this young man if he was ready to preside over this great quorum. His response was: “I’m nervous. I don’t know what a deacons quorum president does. Can you tell me?”

I told him he had a wonderful bishopric and advisers who would help him become a successful and powerful priesthood leader. I knew they would respect the sacred keys of presidency he held.

I then posed this question: “Do you suppose the Lord would call you to this important calling without giving you direction?”

He thought, then responded, “Where do I find it?”

After some discussion, he realized that he would find direction from the scriptures, the words of the living prophets, and answers to prayer. We determined to find a scripture that would be a starting place for his search to learn the responsibilities of his new calling.

We turned to the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 85. It mentions that a deacons quorum president is to sit in council with his quorum members and teach them their duties. We noted that his quorum is not only a class but also a council of young men, and they are to strengthen and edify one another under the president’s direction. I expressed confidence that he would be an outstanding president who would rely on

the inspiration from the Lord and magnify his sacred calling as he taught his fellow deacons their duties.

### Duties of deacons

Then I asked, “Knowing you are to teach the deacons their duties, do you know what those duties are?”

Again we turned to the scriptures and found:

1. A deacon is appointed to watch over and be a standing minister in the Church (see D&C 84:111).

Because the family is the basic unit of the Church, the most important setting in which an Aaronic Priesthood holder can fulfill this duty is in his own home. He provides priesthood service to his father and mother as they lead the family. He also watches over his brothers and sisters, the young men of his quorum, and the other members of the ward.

2. A deacon assists the teacher in all his duties in the Church if occasion requires (see D&C 20:57).

We determined that if a deacon is to assist with the teachers’ duties, he needs to know their duties. We looked in the scriptures and quickly identified over a dozen duties for the office of teacher (see D&C 20:53–59; 84:111). What a powerful experience it would be for every young man—and his father, advisers, and all of us—to do exactly what this young man did: go to the scriptures and discover for ourselves what our duties are. I suspect that many of us will be surprised—and inspired—by what we find. Duty to God contains helpful summaries of Aaronic Priesthood duties and is a great resource for spiritual development. I urge you to consistently use it.

3. Deacons and teachers are also to “warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59; see verses 46 and 68 for priests).

Many young men think that their missionary experience starts when they turn 19 and enter the missionary training center. We learn from the scriptures that it starts long before that. The Lord wants every Aaronic Priesthood holder to invite all to come unto Christ—beginning with his own family.

### The sacred keys of presidency

Next, to help this young president understand that he and he alone was the presiding officer in the quorum, I suggested he read three times the first duty listed in Doctrine and Covenants 107:85. He read, “Preside over twelve deacons.” I asked, “What is the Lord telling you personally about your duty as president?”

“Well,” he said, “several things have popped into my head as we have been talking. I think Heavenly Father wants me to be president of twelve deacons. There are only five of us who come, and one comes only sometimes. So how do we get twelve?”

Now, I had never interpreted this scripture the way he did, but then, he held sacred keys that I did not have. I was being taught by a 13-year-old deacons quorum president about the revelatory power that comes to those with the sacred keys of presidency regardless of their intellect, stature, or age.

I answered, “I don’t know. What do you think?”

And he said, “We need to figure out how to keep him coming. I know there are two others who should be in our quorum, but they don’t come, and I don’t know them. Maybe I can become close friends with one and have my counselors work with the others. If they all came, we would have seven, but where do we get five more?”

“I don’t know,” was my answer, “but if Heavenly Father wants them there, He knows.”

“Then we need to pray as a presidency and quorum to find out what to do.” He

then asked, “Am I responsible for all deacon-age boys in our ward, even those who are not members?”

In awe, I said, “In the Lord’s view, does your bishop have responsibility for only the members of the ward or for all who live within its boundaries?”

This young “standing minister” got it. He recognized the role of every deacon, teacher, and priest in watching over the Church and inviting all to come unto Christ.

My thoughts turn to a scripture as I think of our wonderful young men and women of the Church—a scripture that Moroni quoted to Joseph Smith, saying that it had “not yet [been] fulfilled, but was soon to be” (Joseph Smith—History 1:41)—“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, . . . your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28).

What “popped into” this young president’s head was a vision of what Heavenly Father wants his quorum to be. It was the revelation he needed to strengthen the active members of his quorum, to rescue those who were struggling, and to invite all to come unto Christ. Thus inspired, he made plans to carry out the Lord’s will.

### Priesthood service

The Lord taught this young president that *priesthood* means reaching out to serve others. As our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, explains: “The priesthood is not really so much a gift as 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).

Service is the very foundation of the priesthood—service to others as exemplified by the Savior. I testify that it is His priesthood, we are on His errand, and He has shown all priesthood holders the way of faithful priesthood service.

I invite each deacons, teachers, and priests quorum presidency to regularly counsel, study, and pray to learn what the Lord’s will is for your quorum and then go and do. Use Duty to God to help you teach your quorum members their duties. I invite each quorum member to sustain your quorum president and look to him for counsel as you learn and righteously fulfill all of your priesthood duties. And I invite each of us to see these remarkable young men as the Lord sees them—a powerful resource for building and strengthening His kingdom here and now.

You wonderful young men hold the Aaronic Priesthood, restored by John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery near Harmony, Pennsylvania. Your priesthood holds the sacred keys that open the door for all of Heavenly Father’s children to come unto His Son, Jesus Christ, and follow Him. This is provided through “the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins”; the weekly ordinance of the sacrament; and “the ministering of angels” (D&C 13:1; Joseph Smith—History 1:69). You truly are ministers who must be clean and worthy and faithful priesthood men at all times and in all places.

Why? Listen to the words of our beloved First Presidency, given to each one of you in your Duty to God:

“You have the authority to administer the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood. . . . You will greatly bless the lives of those around you. . . .

“Heavenly Father has great trust and confidence in you and has an important mission for you to fulfill” (*Fulfilling My Duty to God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders* [2010], 5).

I know these words are true, and I pray that each of us will have that same witness. And I say these things in the sacred name of Him whose priesthood we hold, Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Eyring

The choir and the congregation will now sing “Redeemer of Israel.” At the conclusion of the singing, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First

Presidency, will speak to us. It will then be my pleasure to address you.

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The choir and congregation sang “Redeemer of Israel.”

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## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Are we living below our privileges?

There once was a man whose lifelong dream was to board a cruise ship and sail the Mediterranean Sea. He dreamed of walking the streets of Rome, Athens, and Istanbul. He saved every penny until he had enough for his passage. Since money was tight, he brought an extra suitcase filled with cans of beans, boxes of crackers, and bags of powdered lemonade, and that is what he lived on every day.

He would have loved to take part in the many activities offered on the ship—working out in the gym, playing miniature golf, and swimming in the pool. He envied those who went to movies, shows, and cultural presentations. And, oh, how he yearned for only a taste of the amazing food he saw on the ship—every meal appeared to be a feast! But the man wanted to spend so very little money that he didn’t participate in any of these. He was able to see the cities he had longed to visit, but for the most part of the journey, he stayed in his cabin and ate only his humble food.

On the last day of the cruise, a crew member asked him which of the farewell parties he would be attending. It was then that the man learned that not only the farewell party but almost everything on board the cruise ship—the food, the entertainment, all the activities—had been included in the price of his ticket. Too late the man realized that he had been living far beneath his privileges.

The question this parable raises is, Are we as priesthood holders living below our privileges when it comes to the sacred

power, gifts, and blessings that are our opportunity and right as bearers of God’s priesthood?

### The glory and grandeur of the priesthood

We all know that the priesthood is much more than just a name or title. The Prophet Joseph taught that “the Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity . . . to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years.”<sup>1</sup> It holds “even the key of the knowledge of God.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, through the priesthood the very “power of godliness is manifest.”<sup>3</sup>

The blessings of the priesthood transcend our ability to comprehend. Faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders can “become . . . the elect of God.”<sup>4</sup> They are “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies”<sup>5</sup> and can ultimately receive “all that [the] Father hath.”<sup>6</sup> This may be hard to comprehend, but it is beautiful, and I testify that it is true.

The fact that our Heavenly Father would entrust this power and responsibility to man is evidence of His great love for us and a foreshadowing of our potential as sons of God in the hereafter.

Nevertheless, too often our actions suggest that we live far beneath this potential. When asked about the priesthood, many of us can recite a correct definition, but in our daily lives, there may be little evidence that our understanding goes beyond the level of a rehearsed script.

Brethren, we are faced with a choice. We can be satisfied with a diminished