

Beware Concerning Yourselves

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Stay on the priesthood path by deepening your conversion and strengthening your family. ... Avoid tragedy by heeding spiritual “Beware” signs placed along our way by God and prophets.

When I was a young man, our family would drive over America’s Rocky Mountains to visit grandparents. The road began in sagebrush flatlands, ascended through steep, pine-covered slopes, and ultimately emerged into aspen groves and mountaintop meadows, where we could see almost forever.

But this beautiful road was not perfectly safe. Much of the highway was carved into the steep mountainside. To protect travelers, road builders constructed guardrails and placed signs that read, “Beware: Falling Rocks.” We observed ample reason for these warnings. Rocks and boulders were strewn along the riverbed far below the road. Occasionally we could see crumpled cars on the canyon bottom, a tragic record of drivers who failed to beware.

Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

Brethren, each of you has entered, or will soon enter, into the oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood.¹ In that covenant is embedded a glorious journey that begins with receiving both the lesser and higher priesthoods, progresses through magnifying our callings, and climbs ever upward to God’s grandest vistas, until we receive “all that [the] Father hath.”²

The wise designer of that celestial road has erected caution signs for our journey. The oath and covenant of the priesthood contains this soul-searching warning: “I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves.”³

Why would God command us to beware? He knows that Satan is an actual being⁴ who seeks to drag down our souls into the gulf of misery.⁵ God also knows that lurking within priesthood holders is a “natural man”⁶ “prone to wander.”⁷ Thus, prophets invite us to “put off the old man”⁸ and “put on Christ”⁹ through faith, repentance, saving ordinances, and daily gospel living.

Avoiding Tragedy

While ascending the priesthood path, any boy or man can be dragged down if he fails to beware. Have you been stunned and heartbroken by the unexpected fall of an outstanding young man, newly returned missionary, respected priesthood leader, or beloved family member?

The Old Testament story of David is a tragic example of squandered priesthood power. Although he defeated

Goliath while young and lived righteously for decades,¹⁰ this prophet-king was still spiritually vulnerable. In that crucial moment when from his rooftop he saw beautiful Bathsheba bathing, no moral lifeguard stood near to shout, “Beware, David, you fool!” His failure to beware concerning himself¹¹ and to act on promptings of the Spirit¹² led to the loss of his eternal family.¹³

Brethren, if even mighty David can be swept off the road to exaltation, how can we avoid a similar fate?

The twin guardrails of deep personal conversion and strong family relations help keep us on the heavenly highway.

Knowing this, Satan dislodges conversion-crushing and family-fracturing boulders to cross our priesthood path. Thankfully, Jesus Christ and His prophets have placed “Beware” signs along the way. They consistently warn us of conversion-crushing pride¹⁴ and family-fracturing sins such as anger, greed, and lust.

Long ago, Moses counseled, “Beware lest thou forget the Lord.”¹⁵ In our fast-paced and entertainment-saturated world, men are still quick to “forget the Lord, ... to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one.”¹⁶

Deepen Conversion and Strengthen Family

To stay safely on the priesthood path amid rock slides of temptation, I remind us of six fundamental principles that deepen conversion and strengthen family.

First, praying always opens the door for divine help to “conquer Satan.”¹⁷ Each time Jesus alerts priesthood holders to “beware, for Satan desireth to sift [you],” He prescribes prayer as the temptation-countering action.¹⁸ President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. ... A man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.”¹⁹

Second, studying ancient and modern scripture connects us to God. The Lord cautioned Church members to “beware how they hold [the prophets] lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall.”²⁰ To avoid this sobering condemnation, we should diligently read the scriptures as well as Church magazines and websites that enable us to “be counseled in an intimate and personal way by [the Lord’s] chosen prophet.”²¹

Third, worthily participating in ordinances prepares us to take “the Holy Spirit for [our] guide.”²² When the Savior warned, “Beware lest ye are deceived,” He promised we will not be if we “seek ... earnestly the best gifts” of the Spirit.²³ Worthily partaking of the sacrament each week qualifies members to “always have his Spirit to be with them.”²⁴ In temple worship we may “receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost.”²⁵

Fourth, showing genuine love is at the heart of personal conversion and family relations. King Benjamin directed, “Beware lest there shall arise contentions among you.”²⁶ Never forget that Satan is the “father of contention”²⁷ and seeks that family members “fight and quarrel.”²⁸ Brethren, if we are emotionally, verbally, or physically abusive to any member of our family, or bully any person, then we lose priesthood power.²⁹ Choose to control anger. Family members should hear blessings from our mouths, not cursings. We are to influence others only by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and charity.³⁰

Fifth, obeying the law of tithing is an essential element of faith and family unity. Because Satan uses greed and the pursuit of possessions to sweep families off the celestial highway, Jesus advised, “Beware of covetousness.”³¹

Covetousness is restrained as we project our income, pay an honest tithe and generous fast offering, budget needed expenses, avoid unnecessary debt, save for future needs, and become temporally self-reliant. God's promise to us is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."³²

Sixth, fully living the law of chastity yields confidence to stand "in the presence of God" with the Holy Ghost as our "constant companion."³³ Satan is assaulting virtue and marriage with an avalanche of obscenity. When the Lord warned adulterers to "beware and repent speedily," His definition extended beyond the physical act of adultery to the lustful thoughts that precede it.³⁴ Modern prophets and apostles have spoken often and clearly about the plague of pornography. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: "[Pornography] is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. ... The time has come for any one of us who is so involved to pull himself out of the mire."³⁵ If you are tempted to violate the law of chastity in any form, follow Joseph of Egypt's example, who "fled, and got him out."³⁶

These six fundamental principles help priesthood holders continue up the heavenly highway safely between the spiritual guardrails of personal conversion and family relationships. Young men, obeying these principles will prepare you for temple covenants, full-time missionary service, and eternal marriage. Husbands and fathers, living these principles will qualify you to preside over the home in righteousness, serving as your family's spiritual leader, with your wife as an equal partner.³⁷ The priesthood path is a journey filled with joy.

Staying on the Priesthood Path

Returning to my experiences as a young man, I remember one crossing of the Rocky Mountains. After passing a "Beware: Falling Rocks" sign, my father noticed pebbles and small stones landing on the pavement in front of us. He quickly slowed the car to a near stop just as a basketball-sized boulder whizzed by us. Dad waited for the rock slide to cease before continuing. My father's constant attention and immediate action ensured that our family safely reached our final destination.

Brethren, Satan seeks "to destroy the souls of men."³⁸ If your soul is drifting to the edge of a spiritual cliff, stop now before you fall and steer back on course.³⁹ If you feel your soul lies wrecked at the bottom of a canyon rather than high on the priesthood path because you neglected "Beware" signs and sinned, I testify that through sincere repentance and the power of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, you can be lifted up and restored to God's heavenly highway.⁴⁰

Jesus taught, "Beware ye of ... hypocrisy."⁴¹ If you are unworthy to exercise the priesthood, please meet with your bishop, who can help you repent. Take courage that although the Savior affirms, "Beware ... , and refrain from sin,"⁴² He also promises: "I, the Lord, forgive you. ... Go your ways and sin no more."⁴³

I invite every boy and man to stay on the priesthood path by deepening your conversion and strengthening your family. Prayers, scriptures, and ordinances deepen conversion. Love, tithing, and chastity strengthen family. Avoid tragedy by heeding spiritual "Beware" signs placed along our way by God and prophets. Strive to follow the perfect example of Jesus Christ, who "suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them."⁴⁴

I promise that if men keep the priesthood covenant to "beware concerning yourselves,"⁴⁵ we and our families can be assured of safely and joyfully reaching our exalted destination in the celestial kingdom. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44.

2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:43.

4. See Joseph Smith—History 1:16; see also Moses 1:12–22.

5. See Helaman 5:12; see also 2 Nephi 1:13; Helaman 7:16.

6. Mosiah 3:19; see also 1 Corinthians 2:14.

7. “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” *Hymns* (1948), no. 70.

8. See Colossians 3:8–10; see also Ephesians 4:22–24.

9. Galatians 3:27; see also Romans 13:14.

10. See 1 Samuel 13:14; 17:45–47.

11. See 2 Samuel 11:1–17.

12. “You will not make a major mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Spirit” (Boyd K. Packer, “Counsel to Youth,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 18).

13. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:39; see also Bible Dictionary, “David.”
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 23:1; 25:14; 38:39; see also Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 4–7.
15. Deuteronomy 6:12; see also Deuteronomy 8:11–19.
16. Alma 46:8.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 52:12–15; see also Luke 22:31–32; Alma 37:15–17; 3 Nephi 18:18–19.
19. Thomas S. Monson, “Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith,” *Liahona*, Mar. 2009, 4; *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 6.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 90:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 41:1, 12.
21. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Faith: The Essence of True Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 5.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 45:57.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 46:8; see also Ephesians 4:14; Doctrine and Covenants 52:14–16; Colossians 2:8.
24. Moroni 4:3; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77; see also 3 Nephi 18:1–11.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 109:15.

26. Mosiah 2:32.

27. See 3 Nephi 11:29–30.

28. Mosiah 4:14.

29. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36–37; see also Doctrine and Covenants 63:61–63.

30. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–45.

31. Luke 12:15; see also Doctrine and Covenants 38:39.

32. Matthew 6:33; see also 3 Nephi 13:33.

33. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46; see also Doctrine and Covenants 67:11; Moses 1:11.

34. See Doctrine and Covenants 63:14–16; see also Matthew 5:27–28; 3 Nephi 12:27–30.

35. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Tragic Evil among Us,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 59, 62; see also Dallin H. Oaks, “Pornography,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 87–90; Jeffrey R. Holland, “Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 44–46.

36. Genesis 39:12.

37. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.3.

38. Doctrine and Covenants 10:27; see also 1 Peter 5:8.

39. See Doctrine and Covenants 3:9–10; 1 Corinthians 10:12–13; 2 Peter 3:17.

40. See Alma 13:27–29; Doctrine and Covenants 109:21.

41. Luke 12:1; see also Doctrine and Covenants 50:6–9.

42. Doctrine and Covenants 82:2.

43. Doctrine and Covenants 82:1, 7.

44. Doctrine and Covenants 20:22; see also Hebrews 2:17–18; 4:14–16.

45. Doctrine and Covenants 84:43; see also Deuteronomy 4:9; Mosiah 4:29–30.