

# Four Titles

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I would like to suggest four titles ... that may help us recognize our individual roles in God's eternal plan and our potential as priesthood holders.

My dear brethren and beloved friends, it fills my heart with gratitude and joy to be with you. I commend you fathers and grandfathers who have brought your sons and grandsons. I congratulate you young men who have chosen to be here today. This is the place for you to be. I hope you can feel the brotherhood that unites us, and I pray that here, among your brothers, you will find belonging, support, and friendship.

We men sometimes identify ourselves by titles. Many of us have multiple titles, and each says something important about our identity. For example, some titles describe our roles in families, such as *son*, *brother*, *husband*, and *father*. Other titles describe our occupations in the world, such as *doctor*, *soldier*, or *craftsman*. And some describe our positions within the Church.

Today I would like to suggest four titles that I believe apply to all priesthood holders around the world—titles that may help us recognize our individual roles in God's eternal plan and our potential as priesthood holders in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## Son of Heavenly Father

One title that defines all of us in the most fundamental way is *son of Heavenly Father*. No matter what else we are or do in life, we must never forget that we are God's literal spirit children. We were His children before we came to this world, and we will be His children forevermore. This basic truth should change the way we look at ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and life itself.

Unfortunately, none of us quite lives up to everything that this title implies, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."<sup>1</sup>

It can be discouraging at times to know what it means to be a son of God and yet come up short. The adversary likes to take advantage of these feelings. Satan would rather that you define yourself by your sins instead of your divine potential. Brethren, don't listen to him.

We have all seen a toddler learn to walk. He takes a small step and totters. He falls. Do we scold such an attempt? Of course not. What father would punish a toddler for stumbling? We encourage, we applaud, and we praise because with every small step, the child is becoming more like his parents.

Now, brethren, compared to the perfection of God, we mortals are scarcely more than awkward, faltering

toddlers. But our loving Heavenly Father wants us to become more like Him, and, dear brethren, that should be our eternal goal too. God understands that we get there not in an instant but by taking one step at a time.

I do not believe in a God who would set up rules and commandments only to wait for us to fail so He could punish us. I believe in a Heavenly Father who is loving and caring and who rejoices in our every effort to stand tall and walk toward Him. Even when we stumble, He urges us not to be discouraged—never to give up or flee our allotted field of service—but to take courage, find our faith, and keep trying.

Our Father in Heaven mentors His children and often sends unseen heavenly help to those who desire to follow the Savior.

## Disciple of Jesus Christ

And that leads us to the next title we all have in common: all who strive earnestly to follow the Christ are called His *disciples*. Although we recognize that none of us are perfect, we do not use that fact as an excuse to lower our expectations, to live beneath our privileges, to delay the day of our repentance, or to refuse to grow into better, more perfect, more refined followers of our Master and King.

Remember that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is built not for men and women who are perfect or unaffected by mortal temptations, but rather it is built for people exactly like you and me. And it is built upon the rock of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whose Atonement we can be cleansed and become “fellowcitizens ... of the household of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Without the Atonement of Jesus Christ, life would be a dead-end road without hope or future. With the Atonement, life is an ennobling, inspiring journey of growth and development that leads to eternal life in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

But while the Atonement is meant to help us all become more like Christ, it is not meant to make us all the same. Sometimes we confuse differences in personality with sin. We can even make the mistake of thinking that because someone is different from us, it must mean they are not pleasing to God. This line of thinking leads some to believe that the Church wants to create every member from a single mold—that each one should look, feel, think, and behave like every other. This would contradict the genius of God, who created every man different from his brother, every son different from his father. Even identical twins are not identical in their personalities and spiritual identities.

It also contradicts the intent and purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ, which acknowledges and protects the moral agency—with all its far-reaching consequences—of each and every one of God’s children. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are united in our testimony of the restored gospel and our commitment to keep God’s commandments. But we are diverse in our cultural, social, and political preferences.

The Church thrives when we take advantage of this diversity and encourage each other to develop and use our talents to lift and strengthen our fellow disciples.

Brethren, discipleship is a lifelong journey following our Savior. Along our metaphorical path from Bethlehem to Golgotha, we will have many opportunities to abandon our journey. At times it will seem that the path requires more than we had wished for. But as men of the priesthood, we must have the courage to follow our Redeemer, even when our cross seems too heavy to bear.

With every step we take following the Son of God, we may be reminded that we are not perfect yet. But let us be steadfast and constant disciples. Let us not give up. Let us be true to our covenants. Let us never lose sight of our Advocate and Redeemer as we walk toward Him, one imperfect step after another.

## Healer of Souls

Brethren, if we truly follow our Lord Jesus Christ, we must embrace a third title: *healer of souls*. We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God are called to practice “the healer’s art.”<sup>4</sup>

It is our job to build up, repair, strengthen, uplift, and make whole. Our assignment is to follow the Savior’s example and reach out to those who suffer. We “mourn with those that mourn ... and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”<sup>5</sup> We bind up the wounds of the afflicted. We “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”<sup>6</sup>

As home teachers, we are healers. As priesthood leaders, we are healers. As fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands, we should be committed and dedicated healers. We carry in one hand a vial of consecrated oil for blessing the sick; in the other we carry a loaf of bread to feed the hungry; and in our hearts we carry the peaceable word of God, “which healeth the wounded soul.”<sup>7</sup>

This is our first and foremost responsibility as priesthood holders—and it applies to both Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ blesses lives not just when we believe it—but much more when we live it. It is in the application of gospel principles that individuals are uplifted and families are strengthened. It is our privilege and responsibility not just to talk the talk but also to walk the walk.

The Savior is the worker of miracles. He is the great Healer. He is our example, our light, even in the darkest moments, and He shows us the right way.

Let us follow Him. Let us rise up to our role and become healers by serving God and our fellowmen.

## Heir of Eternal Life

The fourth title we all share returns us to the first title in our list. As sons of our Heavenly Father, we are *heirs* to all that He has.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”<sup>8</sup>

Think of this, my beloved brethren. We are joint-heirs with Christ!

So, does it make any sense that many of us spend so much of our valuable time, thoughts, means, and energies in pursuit of prestige or worldly goods or to be entertained by the newest and coolest electronic gadgets?

The Lord has put before us the divine promise that “whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods, ... magnifying their calling, ... [will] receive me, saith the Lord; ... and he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; ... therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.”<sup>9</sup>

It is beyond my power of thought to imagine all that this promise entails. But I do know it is grand, it is divine, it is eternal, and it is worth all of our efforts in life.

Knowing this, how can we not willingly and joyfully engage in serving the Lord and our fellowmen and living up to our responsibilities in the priesthood of God?

This is a most noble labor that will challenge our every sense and stretch our every ability. Do we desire to see the heavens open and witness the promptings of the Holy Spirit showing us the way? Then let's take up our sickle and put our back into this great work—a cause much greater than ourselves!

Serving God and our fellowmen will challenge us and transform us into something greater than we ever thought possible.

Perhaps you might think that you are not needed, that you are overlooked or unwanted, that you are nobody.

I am sincerely sorry if any priesthood holder feels this way. Certainly you are not overlooked or unwanted by your Heavenly Father. He loves you. And I tell you with certainty that you are needed by your Church.

Do you not know that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to [put to shame] the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to [put to shame] the things which are mighty”?<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps it is true that we are weak. Perhaps we are not wise or mighty. But when God works through us, no one and nothing can stand against us.<sup>11</sup>

This is why you are needed. You have your own special contribution to make, and God can magnify that contribution in a mighty way. Your ability to contribute is not dependent upon your calling in the Church. Your opportunities for service are endless. If you are waiting on the sidelines, I encourage you to get in the game.

Don't wait for a particular calling before you become fully engaged in building the kingdom of God. As a priesthood holder, you are already called to the work. Study the word of God daily, pray to Heavenly Father every day, internalize the principles of the restored gospel, give thanks to God, and ask for His guidance. Then live what you learn, first in your family but also in all situations of your life.

In the great Composer's symphony, you have your own particular part to play—your own notes to sing. Fail to perform them, and with certainty the symphony will go on. But if you rise up and join the chorus and allow the power of God to work through you, you will see “the windows of heaven” open, and He will “pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>12</sup> Rise up to your true potential as a son of God, and you can be a force for good in your family, your home, your community, your nation, and indeed in the world.

And in the process, as you “lose [your] life” in the service of others,<sup>13</sup> you will grow and develop until you reach “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”<sup>14</sup> Then you will be prepared to inherit, with Christ, everything your Father has.

## You Are Important to God

My dear brethren, my dear friends, you are important. You are loved. You are needed. This work is true. The priesthood you are privileged to bear is indeed of God.

I pray that as you ponder the many titles of a worthy priesthood holder, you will discover a divine wind at your back, lifting you ever upward toward the great inheritance your Heavenly Father has reserved for you. I leave you this blessing and my testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes

1. Romans 3:23.

2. See Helaman 5:12.

3. Ephesians 2:19.

4. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.

5. Mosiah 18:9.

6. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

7. Jacob 2:8.

8. Romans 8:16–17.

9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33, 35, 37–38.

10. 1 Corinthians 1:27.

11. See Romans 8:31.

12. Malachi 3:10.

13. Matthew 16:25.

14. Ephesians 4:13.

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