

ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

My beloved brethren and sisters, it is with a sense of extreme responsibility that I stand before you here this afternoon, realizing that to take your time is a responsible thing. I pray that you may all give me an interest in your faith and prayers, that the short time I stand before you I may enjoy a portion of the Spirit of God, our Heavenly Father.

LOVE EXPRESSED FOR LEADERS

I am extremely grateful this afternoon for the privilege I had this morning of listening to the testimony of my beloved uncle, the President of the Church. I hope he knows how deeply we all love him. I want to tell him that the Lord cannot extend his years too long to please us, who are so near to him. I believe that I echo the sentiments of this vast congregation when I say that.

I am thankful, likewise, that the Lord has seen fit to spare to us, in the First Council of the Seventy, our very beloved Senior President, Brother Wells. There is nobody whom we love more than we do these men, and we would put with them Brother Clawson, who stands at the head of the Council of the Twelve. We associate with them very closely. We know their integrity and their devotion to the work of the Lord, and we would have naught but peace and joy, happiness and success to crown their future years.

JOY IN MINISTERING AMONG THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS

As we move about among the people we strive to serve you to the very best of our ability, realizing that we are your servants as well as the servants of God, our Heavenly Father. We make very many fine friends. I see many of them in the audience today, and I want to thank them for the kindly ministry that they have given unto us as we move about.

In these visits it has been my privilege to talk with a great many of the officers of the Church, and to study the conditions that prevail throughout the Church, and I believe that we have the finest people on the earth, the finest because they have the purest belief in God, our Heavenly Father, a God to whom we can actually call for blessings, who will recognize that call, and minister unto us according to our wants.

We would like, if we could, to find ways and means of helping each other to live nearer and closer to God our Heavenly Father, to observe better the principles of the Gospel, which we know to be the principles of life and salvation, life here in the earth, which will give us the very fullest possible growth and development, and a life hereafter, with our Heavenly Father. We struggle and we strive, with this aim and purpose. Sometimes we feel that we do not have a very great measure of success. But then frequently we find that we do sow seeds that grow and flourish and produce happiness and joy in the hearts of the people. That, it

seems to me, is our major purpose—to help you to help each other to greater joy and happiness and success.

MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD COMPARISONS

One thing I have noticed, as I move about among the people, that I think maybe it would be worthwhile to call to your attention. You know we minister in the Priesthood especially, and we check the activities of the Priesthood throughout the Church. For more than a year I have been comparing the number of men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, in the different Stakes which I have visited, with the number of families in the Stakes. It startled me almost past belief, the other day, to find in one Stake that I visited that there were possibly only 43 out of 100 families with a representative in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Now, if we had an ideal condition prevailing, the only families not represented in the Melchizedek Priesthood would be the families of widows, because all of the men who are married would marry in the Temple, and all the young women who would marry would marry men who would marry in the Temple. But that does not seem to prevail.

When there are as many, or as few as 43 out of 100 represented in the Melchizedek Priesthood, there seems to be a condition that we might well pay attention to. It runs all the way from 43 to above 95. I visited one Stake where that comparison was as high as 95. That seems to me to be almost an ideal condition. Now, somewhere in between there will be a happy medium. That is what we ought to seek, at least the happy medium. Let us strive to increase that proportion, by teaching our young people the advisability of marrying within the Church. Then let us strive to increase it further by teaching our young people the advantage of working in the quorums of the Priesthood, so that when the time comes that they care to marry, they can be married in the Temple, having been made Elders in the Church.

It seems to me that those things merit our consideration. Just why it is that that proportion is so low in some places, I do not know that I can say, but I believe it is because of the environment in which the young people live in those Stakes, that most of their associations are outside of the Church, and consequently many of them are marrying outside of the Church. Now, it so happens that occasionally a marriage of this kind is rectified because the non-member party to the marriage eventually comes into the Church through conversion. It seems to me, however, that it would be infinitely better for that conversion to be realized beforehand. Isn't it a serious consideration?

THE TEACHING OF MARRIAGE IN THE TEMPLE MOST DESIRABLE

We have those two fields of labor, then, for our Stake missionaries, for instance, and especially for our fathers and mothers, to teach their young people that it is a highly desirable thing to marry within the Church, to marry people whose sympathies are like yours, whose faith is like yours, who understand you, and whom you can understand. And then to teach these young men their duties, so that this group, which we

call the Adult Aaronic Priesthood group, will shrink to the vanishing point. It would be a wonderful thing if we could accomplish that one thing within the Church. If we could do it, even to reduce it just a little, within the next year, think what a wonderful project that would be within our Stakes and within our families.

There is nothing we could do, perhaps, that would help our young people to a better realization of their possibilities, than to so teach them that they would marry in the Temple. There is nothing that I have ever been more grateful for than that privilege, the privilege of being sealed to my wife for not only this life but for an eternity which is to come. The very sanctity and sacredness of that thing is one of the greatest supports that we could have in life. It is one of the very finest objectives that we could have in dealing with our young people. Now, to impress upon them the sanctity of it and the desirability of it, we have to teach them some other things.

RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERS TOWARDS THE YOUNG

There are far too many of us who fail to teach our young people the law of chastity. Nothing in a man's life, or that of a woman, can give the satisfaction and the joy that comes from the realization that your life has been a chaste and upright life. These young people are placed in our trust, and we have a responsibility towards them. If we can increase their happiness, their joy and their safety, by teaching them these things, it is a sacred duty on our part to do it. Let us never let a son or daughter of ours, who may be found in sin, be able to say to us that either for lack of teaching or by example we are responsible for his or her downfall.

I hope that we may be able to so instill in their hearts a love for these things that such practices as repeatedly come to our notice, where men fail in this respect, will likewise diminish to the vanishing point. I would that every man and woman in the Church were able to bow their heads before God, their Heavenly Father, and swear that they are chaste and upright.

I compliment you fathers and mothers on the great numbers of your boys and girls who can look us, their Presiding Authorities, in the eye, and swear that they are clean, before they go on their missions. I do not know any place in the world where you could find as high a percentage of men and women that can do so. But as near perfect as that may be, we might increase it. We might make that better, with just a little more care given to our young people. I pray that God will give us the strength and the courage and the frankness to meet them on common ground, and teach them the way of life. God bless you. Amen.