

priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. (D. & C. 84:39-40.)

Here is a definite, positive statement that every man who receives the priesthood, receives it with an oath and covenant that he will magnify his calling, that he will be faithful and true, and his reward will be to become a son of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ in having the fulness of the Father's kingdom. No greater blessing could be offered. And then the Lord has said:

Therefore all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. (*idem.*)

Now, these promises were not made to high priests alone, but to all who receive the priesthood. And then the Lord is promising us everything that he has if we will be faithful. Isn't it only fair, that the punishment for violation of that covenant and the trampling of that priesthood under our feet should bring a punishment, on one hand, as severe, as glorious will be the reward on the other? And so the Lord says:

But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come. (D. & C. 84:41.)

Oh, if we could only impress that upon the mind of every man when he is called to receive the priesthood! Now, only those who magnify their callings will be chosen.

The Lord bless you, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER JOSEPH L. WIRTHLIN

#### *Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

I sincerely trust, my brethren, that I might enjoy the spirit of the Lord the few minutes that I stand before this magnificent body of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I listened to the opening prayer of this session of our conference tonight, there was one thought expressed that made a deep impression upon me, and that was the thought that we should put our arms around those who have become inactive and indifferent in the Church. Our responsibility to those who become indifferent brings to mind the scripture presented by Elder Mark E. Petersen in his most inspirational address. It is found in Ephesians 4:11-13.

#### ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.

As I analyze these words of Paul, they seem to fall into two distinct parts. The first part has to do with those who are the designated servants of the Lord. The second part outlines the assignments to these servants; first, the assignment of perfecting the Saints; second, the work of the ministry; third, the edifying of the body of Christ until we all come to a unity of the faith; and fourth, a knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man.

### THE TEACHER'S DUTIES

We are all familiar with the responsibility of each group of these servants of the Lord, but I should like to make particular reference to the group that Paul calls the teachers. Considering the office of teacher in the Church first, and secondly the assignment of perfecting the Saints, establishing faith in their hearts, and giving them a complete knowledge of the mission, the sacrifice and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, it would seem that in the scriptures there should be a plan or formula whereby these teachers might accomplish the objectives outlined in the declaration of Paul. The formula or plan is found in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in section 20, verse 53 of the Doctrine and Covenants wherein the Lord said:

The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them; And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking; And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all members do their duty.

This is the Lord's plan, and in it there are found five distinct steps: first, the teacher's duty is to watch over the Church always, which indicates that the assignment of teaching the people isn't an assignment for any specified period of time but one that might be a life's mission, for the Lord used the word "always." The second step involves the teacher being with and strengthening them. The third step is to see that there is no iniquity in the Church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking; fourth, to see that the Church meet together often; fifth, and also see that all the members do their duty.

In analyzing this great priesthood assignment of perfecting the Saints, it will require constant motivation, teaching, and particularly in guarding the Saints against those who come as wolves in sheep's clothing, teaching the doctrines of men which are always false doctrines. The untiring effort, prayers, and presence of the teacher, the guardian of the flock, are necessary in order to strengthen the Saints in knowledge, in their faith, and in their testimonies, to the end that they will know of a surety that the restored gospel of Christ is being taught by the teacher of the Lord, and to enjoy a testimony that whispers constantly to them that the gospel as restored to the

Prophet Joseph Smith is the Lord's plan wherein they can enjoy salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father.

It logically follows that if the Saints are to be perfected, of necessity iniquity, hardness with each other, lying, backbiting, and evil speaking must be eliminated from their daily lives. If you will think of iniquity, think of hardness, think of lying, backbiting, and evil speaking, inevitably you think of Satan, who is the source of these sins which have caused and do cause sorrow and death. The emotions of hate, criticism, and backbiting that he inculcates into the hearts of men are the causes for apostasy, for whenever a man in this Church finds fault, practices backbiting and evil speaking, he becomes hardened in his heart, and the spirit of God departs from him. Unless there is a change, this course leads to apostasy and degradation. The teachers of the Church being the watchmen on the towers of Zion should have as one of their objectives so to teach the Saints that they will have the strength to overcome these vices and evils to the end that the perfection spoken of by Paul will ultimately be their achievement and blessing.

The duty of the teacher to see that the Church meet together often is of utmost importance, for in meeting together often, the Lord has promised that his spirit will be present in rich abundance; and where his spirit is found, truth, love, and light will be the blessings of those who are in attendance. The teacher should encourage the Saints to meet together on the Lord's day, to rest from their labors, and, most important of all, to partake of the emblems of the Last Supper to the end that the body of the crucified Redeemer will become so edified that the people will know that the broken body that hung on the cross and the spilled blood brought about the atonement and made the resurrection possible. Furthermore, through the edification of the body of the Savior as represented in the sacrament, the Saints will have a testimony of his divine calling and always be willing to remember him and keep his commandments.

The teacher should so inspire the Saints that all of them will do their duty as the Lord commanded, for out of duty is personal development and spiritual progress possible, for "faith without works is dead." Personal development and spiritual progress go for perfection in character, in noble deeds, and in doing the will of our Heavenly Father, and the reward, therefore, is one which is divinely given in the form of a testimony, a testimony of the divine mission of the Savior, a testimony of the mission of Joseph Smith, a testimony of the fact that those who now guide and direct the destiny of this work do it under the inspiration of our Heavenly Father's holy spirit and with the mantle of authority upon their shoulders which was restored through the instrumentality of John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John. Activity is the strongest bulwark against the temptations and snares of the evil one. Activity is the lifeblood of this great organization. It is the foundation for an enduring testi-

mony which can be lost when an individual does not do his duty and becomes inactive and indifferent.

The servants of the Lord, these teachers, were assigned to watch over the Church always and to be with and strengthen its membership and are selected by the Lord's representative, the bishop. But who are to be chosen to this great priesthood assignment? This question is not difficult to answer, for the bishop and his counselors have the right to call on every high priest, every seventy, every elder, every priest, and every teacher, who is worthy of this great and holy calling.

Ofttimes the remark is heard, "I have been teaching for ten or fifteen years and feel that because of this long tenure in office, I have graduated from this field of activity." I want to say emphatically, brethren, that any man who makes such a declaration might as well add, "I have graduated from the priesthood that I hold." The man who holds the priesthood of God is expected to render service as long as he lives, for his priesthood is endless. Furthermore, he is expected to respond to any and all calls that are made of him by the proper authority. Anything short of this is comparable to renouncing one's priesthood.

There is no honor with more distinction attached to it than the honor of teaching the people. The Savior set the proper example. His whole ministry was devoted to the welfare of the people and particularly to teaching them the doctrines of the kingdom. Surely, no one holding the priesthood will forego the privilege of following the example of the great Teacher. The Lord commanded Joseph Smith that we should teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom, and there is no better way than visiting among the people and teaching them the doctrines of the restored gospel. There are those who feel that they should be excused from teaching the people because of other duties, but it is felt that although members of the priesthood are engaged in other activities such as the auxiliaries, the assignment of teaching the people should take precedence for it is a priesthood activity, and the priesthood comes first. There is only one exception to this rule, and this exception is made by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve: in the case of stake presidencies and high councils, they are exempt from teaching because they constitute a court of the Church, and it is felt to be necessary that their minds be free of bias or prejudice. If they were to visit among the people as teachers or arbitrators, these men who constitute the high council court might find themselves in situations where their minds might become prejudiced because of contacts with those who are engaged in controversy. But the stake presidency and high council are responsible for the ward teaching in their stake, to see that it is done in all the wards and that the commandment of the Lord as revealed to the Prophet Joseph is carried out fully.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS

What are the qualifications of a teacher? A teacher should be a man who teaches by example and lives every doctrine and principle that he advocates. I am not hesitant in saying to you that when a man goes forth to teach the principles of the gospel, having a clear conscience and knowing in his own heart that he is obeying and abiding by the principles of the gospel to the best of his ability, he can with certainty know that he will teach the Saints with the inspiration of God's spirit resting mightily upon him. He can teach in the spirit of sincerity, and the impression that he will make upon those who listen to him will be lasting and will sow the seeds of faith and obedience. A teacher should always be prepared. My observations indicate that many times teaching is done without proper preparation and that the monthly ward teachers' message prepared by the Presiding Bishop's Office is the crutch upon which many of our brethren lean. The message may be read before visiting the people, but there are many instances where it is read for the first time in the home of some Latter-day Saint, which is a confession that the teachers have come unprepared, and the impression made under such circumstances is very unfavorable. Proper preparation is of utmost importance, for upon it success depends.

Teachers should know the families which constitute their flock. More important, they should know each individual to the end that they can provide the bread of life that is needed, not only collectively but individually, rendering such counsel as will encourage and stimulate greater activity. Teaching on this basis will preclude the use of a printed message, the teachers being prepared and inspired to give such message as is needed in each particular home. I am sure the time is coming, and it isn't too far distant, when the printed message, which has been placed in your hands and is known as the monthly ward teaching message, may be eliminated entirely, and we shall go back to teaching the people, relying upon the Lord's spirit and making careful, prayerful preparation in order to be fully qualified to carry out the mandate of perfecting the Saints, of bringing them to a unity of the faith through the elimination of iniquity, backbiting, evil speaking, and hardness with each other. Servants of the Lord should be in constant communication with him in the performance of duty to be done. Nothing is of more importance than getting down upon one's knees with a junior companion, a teacher or a priest, and supplicating the Lord for his blessings and assistance in this great assignment. I do not hesitate to promise any pair of teachers who kneel down and ask God for his help, after having made proper preparation, that they will be impressed to do those things which will be most efficacious in the lives of their flock.

Teaching the people requires regularity. In other words, we should establish in the Church the practice of teaching the people on the first and second Thursday of each month. Thereby it would

be only a short time until the people would become accustomed to having the teachers visit on a definite night, that over the Church generally, these two nights will be known as ward teaching nights, and most people will set them aside in anticipation of the teachers' visit.

It must always be remembered that the teachers visit the people with definite objectives in mind, to strengthen them to see that they do their duty. Therefore, all material foreign to this important assignment should be deleted from the conversation. Much of our time and the time of the people is spent in discussing such topics as the weather, politics, and the war, and in so doing we are wasting our time, the people's time, and most important of all, the Lord's time, because teachers are in his service and he expects us to devote the time involved to the welfare and good of the people.

#### TRAINING OF AARONIC PRIESTHOOD MEMBERS

I should like to draw to the attention of you older men the responsibility that you have and the privilege you enjoy in the companionship of a member of the Aaronic Priesthood. This young man looks to you for leadership and rightfully, too, and if you disappoint him in keeping the appointments made, if you fail to assume responsibility of leadership in teaching, if you fail to give him the opportunity of expression, it logically follows that the young man will look upon teaching as something of small consequence. On the other hand, with the right kind of leadership, this young man receives a training and an experience that will qualify him for the mission field and, most important of all, burn into his heart a testimony that he is a servant of the Lord. I recall my experience as a teacher. My first companion was an old Scandinavian brother who could hardly speak the English language distinctly and correctly. When the bishop assigned me to go with him, I had many reservations and rather reluctantly consented. This grand man came to me and said, "I am happy to have you as my companion. You come to my home on such and such a night that we might make proper preparation." I went to his home on the designated night with some misgivings. I was invited to kneel down with him in his humble home and ask for the blessings of the Lord, and, brethren, I testify that although this Scandinavian brother spoke broken English, he enjoyed the spirit of God in rich abundance, and I soon discovered in the thirteen families we visited, among whom were the rich and the humble, that this good man was received with the highest degree of respect.

I ask you older brethren to manifest a keen interest in the priests and the teachers of the Church to the end that they will come not only to know but to feel in their hearts that they are in the service of the Master, the service of perfecting his Saints and bringing them to a unity of the faith.

## WATCHING OVER THE CHURCH

The Lord's declaration to watch over the Church always entails the responsibility of being willing to visit and be with the Saints whenever necessary, which should eliminate from our thinking that teaching the people requires but one night a month. It might require two nights; it may require three nights; it may require as many nights as are necessary to complete the assignment and to be ever on guard against any influences that are detrimental to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the people. It is essential that the ward teacher should attend all of his meetings for two reasons: first, for his personal benefit; and secondly, to perform his duty of watching over the Church always, which implies that he will take a mental roll of all his little flock that are present. Those who are absent should be contacted with the thought in mind of stimulating them to activity and to carry out the mandate of the Lord to see that the Church meet together often.

There may be those who are in temporal difficulties. If you are watching over the Church always, you will be able and be sufficiently qualified to report the temporal circumstances of such families to the bishop. If you are watching over the Church always, you will be available to render assistance to those who are ill and to the home of death. Surely, the heartfelt interest of the true shepherd of the flock will return to him the rich blessings of appreciation, gratitude, and love for his thoughtful and kindly administrations to those in difficulty.

## RECEIVING THE TEACHERS IN THE HOME

I have drawn to your attention a few of the responsibilities of the teacher, but there are other responsibilities. There is another phase of this great and important assignment that has to do directly with you and me who are being and who are to be taught by these servants of the Lord. I ask the question, "Do I receive these men, do you receive these men, with the highest degree of respect and hospitality, or do we merely tolerate them out of superficial courtesy?" It is my feeling, brethren, that we assume an attitude of indifference. Many times we fail to lay aside the evening paper, turn off the radio, call in the family to receive the message of the Lord's servants. If we expect to be built up in our faith, to achieve perfection in our lives as Paul said, these men should be received with all the courtesy and respect at our command. Certainly, if the President of the Church were to come to our door or the president of the stake or the bishop of the ward, we would feel highly honored to do all within our power to show him proper deference. The teacher comes to our door, holding the same priesthood as the President of the Church or the president of the stake, or the bishop of the ward and, being the representative of the Lord, should receive a wholehearted welcome. If we will open our hearts and minds, these men as the instruments

of the Lord will feed us the bread of life, and if there ever was a time when we need divine direction and the bread of life, it is in this day of distraction and difficulty. Furthermore, the visit of the teachers extends an excellent opportunity for our sons and daughters to come into the family circle in the presence of the Lord's servants, feeling free to ask any questions they might have. I feel convinced that the youth of Israel have many questions that go unanswered because there was no opportunity nor the right place to answer them, but in the presence of father and mother and the teachers, the shepherds of the flock, these questions can be discussed freely and openly to the end that these young people will be built up in their faith and testimonies.

#### SAVING THOSE WEAK IN FAITH

It is my duty in the Presiding Bishopric's Office to consider the names of those who request their names to be deleted from the records of the Church. Only yesterday six such names came to my attention, the names of individuals who requested that they be relieved of Church membership because some of them had joined other faiths and felt that they had found the truth. There can be no greater fallacy than believing that one has found the church of the Lord when he has already been in it and leaves it for the organization of some man, but it is my conviction that some of these people leave the fold, some of them are excommunicated, because you and I, the watchmen on the towers, the shepherds of the flock, are not doing our full duty. I want to tell you that no man will give up his faith, will give up the restored gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ or will give up his membership in this Church for any other faith or any other organization if he has a full understanding and comprehension of the gospel as it has been restored in this day. The reasons they leave are that they do not fully understand it and that many of them become critical and disobedient, which necessitates, on our part, greater activity and more alertness, a greater willingness to watch over the Church always and be with them and strengthen them. Many of these people could be saved to the Church if the teacher were doing his full duty.

It is as the Savior said to Peter:

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he had said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17.)

Brethren, you have the great honor, yes, the great responsibility of feeding the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ. If I were to



ask you, "Do you love Jesus Christ?" with one accord I am sure you would respond in the affirmative, and in response to such, I feel sure the words of the Christ would come down through the centuries, declaring again, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs."

May God bless each and every one of us that we will feel highly honored in teaching the people to the end that we might have a part in the Lord's greatest plan and work, best declared in his words:

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. (Moses 1:39.)

which I humbly pray each and every one of us will endeavor to do, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER MILTON R. HUNTER

#### *Of the First Council of the Seventy*

It is indeed an inspiring sight to stand here and look into the faces of the thousands of holders of the priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I have been thinking while sitting here tonight that there is more divine authority, more right to use that divine authority in this building tonight than in all of the rest of the world combined. We have here the President of the Church, who holds the keys of the priesthood, the keys of the kingdom of God; we have here the General Authorities, who have been delegated certain rights, authority, and power of that priesthood, and we have many other holders of the priesthood in this audience. I trust and pray that we will carry on our work in this priesthood in a desirable way before our Heavenly Father. I trust that the few words that I say tonight will be inspired by the Spirit of God, because I do feel a weakness in standing before this great assembly.

#### THE CONDITIONS AT THE CLOSE OF THE WAR

We are all rejoicing during recent days in the fact that the terrible war has come to a close and that the ruthless killings and destruction have been replaced by peace. I, with all of you, hope and pray that all of God's children throughout the entire world will cooperate with our Heavenly Father and his Only Begotten Son in bringing about a permanent peace; but such will be the case only when we all accept and obey the pattern of life established by the Savior, which is conducive to peace.

For a number of years human life has been regarded by the leaders of many nations of the earth as being very cheap. Thousands, yes, millions, of men and women have been ruthlessly sacrificed on the fields of battle. The philosophy of some of the major races of people has completely disregarded the sacredness of human life. Instead of honoring the dignity and worth of mankind, these nations referred to have honored and practically worshipped the glory of the group—that is, the strength, power, and hope of world-