

else to assist us. His Spirit will be with us every day, at all times, if we serve God humbly and pray for his guidance.

This delightful experience came in the form of a testimony out in the mission that I recently visited. A young missionary bearing his testimony of what it meant to the family for a young man to go on a mission, and how the Lord truly provided, recited this incident:

When I left home I didn't know whether father would be able to make it or not in keeping up the expenses but he and mother said "Go, we'll do the best we can for you, Son."

I came into the missionary field. We had been getting along all right and last week I received a letter from father. He told the story that they were working hard and they had harvested a good crop, and then he told the story of my little brother eleven years old.

Dad said, "I have been giving your brother work on the binder. We were giving him fifty cents an acre to run it. He had done very well; he had worked early and late. Then the day came when we were to pay him. The neighbors had sent in their checks and I was going to pay him. I asked him: 'Now Son what are you going to do with the money?' Your brother said: 'Well, Father, I want a pair of Levis and I want to go to the County Fair and the rest I want to send to my brother on his mission.'"

He enjoyed that voice within. The Lord was guiding him in his tender years. He had caught the spirit that his brother had in missionary service.

With the same feeling I bear my testimony: have patience wherever you are called to labor, that those for whom you work may "look up to the spires," and receive inspiration and comfort. Oh, listen to the voice within, that it may guide you safely on the way. Do not be disturbed by the scare lines of papers and commentators on the radio. Know that you have God with you if you but do his will.

I thank him humbly for these things, and I bear testimony and pray for all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## ELDER STEPHEN L RICHARDS

### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I would like to send out greetings and a message to the elders of the Church. I refer to those belonging to the elders quorums, not to all of those who are sometimes designated as elders who belong to other quorums. I think that it is necessary to send this message out by you, my brethren and sisters, because large numbers of this priesthood are not present at our conference here today, and many may not even be listening in to the proceedings.

## ELDERS QUORUMS

The elders constitute our largest body of priesthood. There are one thousand and thirty-three quorums, with seventy-two thou-

sand nine hundred and four members enrolled, making the average enrollment in each quorum just about seventy.

The quorums are widely distributed throughout the stakes of Zion and in some of the missions of the Church, affording adequate opportunity for all men holding this priesthood to be served by their quorums.

The quorums are under the direct presidencies and supervision of the stake presidency who determine and ordain the membership and select and install their officers. In fact, the maintenance of these quorums constitutes, perhaps the most direct and exclusive priesthood responsibility which the stake presidencies have.

The membership of the quorums is made up of young men, middle-aged men, and older men. Many of the young men are on missions or are preparing to fill missions or have recently returned therefrom. Some of the young men come into the quorums in contemplation of marriage, and some merely by way of advancement from the Aaronic Priesthood.

To all of these young men I extend my congratulations. Brethren, you have attained a high place and great distinction in the Church of God. You have been accorded recognition for your faith, your clean living, and your worthy ambition to be servants of our Lord. The honor which has come to you and the responsibilities and opportunities which arise out of your high calling are immeasurable, as I shall attempt to show. I pray the Lord to bless you young elders, that your appreciation and enthusiasm for this newly-acquired priesthood shall grow and deepen with the years and your experiences, and that you will never cease to regard it as your most priceless possession.

#### HIGH HONOR OF ELDERS' CALLING

And now, I address myself to members of the elders quorums who have been members for five, ten, twenty, or more years. Brethren of this group, did you ever think when, as a young man you were ordained an elder preparatory to going on a mission or being married in the temple, that in five, ten, or twenty years you would lose regard for that high honor and the precious gift which has come to you? Did you ever think that the time would come when you would no longer wish the association and fellowship of your brethren in the quorum? Did you ever think then that you would fail to respond to the calls coming to you through your quorum for a kindly service to a fellow member or his family or to others in need? Did it ever occur to you in those days of your young manhood, with this Holy Priesthood resting upon you, when you took your young sweetheart to the holy temple, where your marriage was sealed and sanctified and your home begun, with a resolution in your young heart to attain through your faithfulness those transcendent blessings pronounced

upon you—did it ever occur to you then that in five, ten, or twenty years hence you would have forgotten those solemn resolutions and abandoned your ambition and disappointed and saddened your dear companion?

I am sure you never thought that in those early days of your eldership these things would come.

How have they come to all too many of this great body of priesthood? I think perhaps I can tell you, or at least I can try.

#### LOSS OF INTEREST

Some of you began to slip when you let other affairs and other engagements take you away from your quorum meetings. You began to prefer other company to that of your fellow members. You left the work of the quorums to those few sturdy wheel horses always willing to carry on. You subordinated the quorum to other things you considered more important. You gradually lost the desire for the education and the opportunities it affords. And then after you had removed yourself from the warm, stimulating influence of your brethren in the quorum, you found yourselves becoming critical, critical of the teachings, lessons, and procedure, and you summed it all up as rather dull business, possibly without realizing that you and others like you might have made it most interesting and profitable.

And then you forgot another thing, which our brother who prayed in the session this morning brought to our attention. You forgot when you were ordained that a great confidence and trust was reposed in you, and you forgot that you must be true to that trust. You neglected it.

I remember years ago hearing of a young elders' quorum presidency setting out to visit all the members of their quorum. They came to the home of one, a man of maturity who had had considerable business success, and knocked at his door. He came to the door. They told him who they were, that his name was on the record of members, and that they had come to visit him. He said, these were the words he used: "Well, gentlemen, you may come in if you wish, but I must tell you in advance that I have long since lost interest in the work you represent. I have repented of some of the follies of my youth"—he had been on a mission—"and I now devote myself to more substantial things."

Naturally they were chilled with such a reception, and they were about to depart when they heard the voice of this man's wife, who had apparently overheard the conversation. She called to them: "Brethren, please come again."

Largely in response to her appeal, these young men took courage to go again and again, and after a time, in part through their efforts, in part through the persuasion of his wife, this man repented

of the follies he had committed since his youth, and came back to activity in the Church and held a responsible office.

#### WEAKNESSES OF MEMBERS

Then, my brethren of the quorums, you did other things that drew you away. Without the aid and encouragement of your brethren you succumbed to some weaknesses. If you had smoked before your ordination, you took it up again. If you had never smoked, you formed the acquaintance of men who did, and you took up the practice to be one with them, as you thought. Some of you began drinking a little for the same purpose. You joined the clubs and the societies of these men of the world, sometimes their lodges. You laughed at cheap jokes about the priesthood. You joined in their pleasures and pastimes on Sundays. When you might have been exercising your priesthood, you played golf with them; you went hunting and fishing; and after awhile some of you forgot, forgot that you belonged to a quorum, that you were bound to your brethren by sacred ties, forgot even that you had been set apart and vested with a holy power to make you men "different" from other men in the world.

Now I grant that this may not have been the course of all who have become inactive in the elders' quorums of the Church. Exact-ing occupations, in some cases, disappointments, real or fancied differences with Church Authorities, and pure indolence may have made their contributions, but on sober consideration, my brethren, I believe you will agree that the course which I have outlined is that which many have followed.

#### MESSAGE FOR INACTIVE

Now this is the message that I send out to you elders of the Church who are inactive in its affairs and indifferent to your responsibilities and opportunities. Study yourselves. Hark back to the days when you received the priesthood. Try to live again the joy and pride which it brought to you. Trace your lines of authority and find out how proximate you are to the restoration of the priesthood in this dispensation. Never disparage in your own estimation the office of an elder in the Church of Christ. Remember that this Church was organized by two elders, the first and second elder of the Church, and that it was the first office in the Church. No higher priesthood than that of elder is required to be a minister of the gospel and to preach to the nations of the earth. No higher priesthood is required to go into the holy temple and receive the lofty blessings that are therein bestowed. No higher priesthood is required to enter into the eternal covenant of marriage and become the head of a great household.

I once heard President Joseph F. Smith say, over in the Assembly Hall at one of the special priesthood meetings held in connection with the general conference of the Church, that if all the priesthood of the Church were to be obliterated save one elder only, he would have the inherent right and power under appointment to reorganize the entire Church with all its offices.

Be proud to be an elder. Enrich your lives by close association with your fellow quorum members. Make the quorums of the elders the finest clubs and fraternities in this world.

Do you know, my brethren, that the greatest reservoir of power and strength in the whole Church is in these quorums of the elders? Make that power available to the Church, and it will go forward by leaps and bounds.

The final appeal I make to you, my brethren, is do not disappoint and grieve your wives and families. Every understanding faithful Latter-day Saint woman knows that the highest blessings which may come to her and her children must come through the priesthood. She knows that there can be no perpetuation of the family in eternity without a husband and father honoring the Holy Priesthood. Many a good wife and mother today is filled with apprehension and sorrow in the neglect and behavior of the elder who stands at the head of her household.

For her sake, for the sake of her children and your children, and other men's children, I plead with you to forsake worldly habits and your indifference and neglect and criticism, and come back to the association of your brethren who love you.

#### DIVINITY OF PRIESTHOOD

You know when you stop to think that the priesthood you hold is genuine. Very few of you have strayed so far that you have lost that testimony. It may be dormant, but it is not dead. It will be rekindled, with your renewed activity, and it will bless your lives with inexpressible happiness and joy.

I know that that priesthood which we are honored to bear is genuine and divine. I know that it is more than a name. I know that in it is an essence of force and of power. I cannot explain it, but I know that there is a constituency in it which someday we will understand, and that it emanates from God himself.

I have felt that power. I have seen its effects. I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith received it from angelic ministers, and I know that it has been transmitted to you and to me to be used in the blessing of God's children and the establishment of his work. I will try to honor that priesthood. Will you, my brethren?

I pray that we may and that God will help us so to do, in the name of the Lord Jesus, whose servants we are. Amen.

The Choir and congregation sang the hymn, "High On the Mountain Top."