

Elder LeGrand Richards

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Brethren, I feel humble this evening as I stand here before you, this wonderful body of priesthood. With you, I enjoyed the message from President McKay and the message and information that we had from Brother Lee; and I am sure that we realize that we should not be just hearers only of the word, but doers.

The spirit of meekness

I think of a message that I received in a letter from one of my grandsons, who was on a mission in Switzerland. He is now a bishop, and I think he is listening in here tonight. In that letter he told me about how he was qualifying a man for baptism and was telling him about what would be expected of him, such as keeping the Word of Wisdom and paying tithing and working in the priesthood to help build the kingdom; and the man stopped him, and said, "You don't need to tell me all those things." He said, "All I want to know is, was Joseph Smith a prophet of God? If he was, I will do anything that the Prophet asks me to do."

I hope we all feel that way toward our great leader today, that all we want to know is what he wants us to do, and what the Lord wants us to do.

Some of you will remember that President Grant often used to tell us that we sing "We thank thee O God for a prophet, to guide us in these latter days," but, he said, "There are many of the Latter-day Saints who would like to add a P.S.: 'Providing he doesn't ask us to do what we don't want to do.'"

I hope that we don't accept the counsel and the advice of our great leaders with any reservation, and that we want to do all they would have us do.

Speaking of the priesthood, and we have many boys of the Aaronic Priesthood here tonight, it was my great pleasure to supervise the Aaronic Priesthood of the Church as Presiding Bishop for 14 years.

Human authority expires

When one of my boys was ordained a deacon (and incidentally, it was in the mission field and the branch president didn't even wait until I got home from a trip in the mission to let me ordain him), after I returned he came into my office and said, "Daddy, I have more authority than the President of the United States, haven't I?" It took my breath away. I had to think pretty fast, and finally I said, "Well, yes, you do. The President of the United States gets his authority from the people, and when his term of office expires, his authority is all gone. Yours comes from the Lord, and if you will live for it, it will be yours forever and ever."

After he had grown into manhood and was in the mission field, I memorized one statement from his letter, which read like this: "Father, these saints are wonderful. They do us all kinds of favors. Shucks, they make my fraternity brothers look sick." He said, "I will never ask for the privilege of joining a fraternity again. The priesthood of God is the greatest union in all the world, isn't it?"

Now, I believe that with all my heart, and I was happy to know that my son had come to that conclusion in his youth. Isn't that what President McKay said tonight in his message: that it is the greatest brotherhood in all the world? I know that this is true. We can go anywhere in this world, and it doesn't matter what mission it is; for as long as people have taken upon them the name of Christ in the waters of baptism, they are truly brothers and sisters, no matter what color their skin may be. It is the greatest brotherhood in all the world.

The priesthood will fill the earth

I would like to read a statement from the Prophet Joseph as related by President Wilford Woodruff in general conference, April 1898. He tells

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about when he first met the Prophet Joseph, which was back in 1833, three years after the Church was organized. These are the words of the Prophet: "Brethren, I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and Kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. It is only a little handful of priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world. It will fill the Rocky Mountains. There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered in the Rocky Mountains, and there they will open the door for the establishing of the Gospel among the Lamanites. . . ." (*Conference Report*, April 1898, p. 57.) I have already talked to five groups of priesthood today on the work with the Lamanites.

The Prophet said there was only "a handful of priesthood." Now maybe he knows what is going on here tonight, but when we are told that this priesthood meeting is being broadcast in 502 buildings, with a possible attendance—in addition to what is on this block—of 95,000 people, isn't the spirit of understanding and testimony marvelous that this great Prophet of this dispensation had, to be able to point to the future of the Church? At that time, and that was 14 years before the saints came west to the Rocky Mountains, he said they would come here, that the saints would be gathered in the Rocky Mountains, and there they would open the door for the establishment of the gospel among the Lamanites.

Some years ago while I was the Presiding Bishop of the Church, we had what we called the Aaronic Priesthood pageant. I don't know if any of you are old enough to remember that or not, but we repeated it a year or so after the first showing. We had people who were traveling through tell us that it was the most impressive religious gathering they had ever seen in their lives. It was built

around the theme that we lived in the spirit world before we were born; and then we were told we would come upon the earth and would have experiences here such as we could not have there; and the question was asked, "Will there be anyone there to show us the way?" The answer was, "There will be your parents and the Church, and the priesthood of God."

I hope that we fathers who are here today realize how great our responsibility is. We have been told that by all of our leaders. President McKay has said so often that no success in life can compensate for failure in the home.

I once heard President Joseph F. Smith make the statement that he hoped it could never be said of him that, in trying to save others, he had lost his own.

A short time after the pageant, one of the good sisters attending Relief Society out in the Southeast was telling about how she brought her husband to see that pageant. In the pageant each of the boys had a little spotlight on his forehead, and then some of those lights went out. In one scene, there they were, on the platform, discussing all their problems, and one little fellow turned and said, "My father doesn't go to priesthood meeting, and I want to be like my father." This woman, in telling about taking her husband to the pageant, said when that little fellow said, "My father doesn't go to priesthood meeting, and I want to be like my father," she felt her husband just cringe, like he had been hit with an electric shock. The next Sunday morning when the boy got ready for his priesthood meeting, the father said, "Wait a minute, son. I am going with you." The boy said, "You are kidding me, Dad." But his mother got his eye, and you know what happened.

The power of fathers influence

I don't suppose I would be standing here tonight were it not for the noble teachings and example of that father of mine. I grew up on a farm. When everything went dead wrong, as it did

at times, I remember a hayrack we were trying to get on the gears; it tumbled down, and the worst swear word I ever heard my father use in all the years on that farm was "Oh, fiddlesticks," and I think the Lord will forgive him for that.

I can remember hoeing weeds out of the old corn patch—acres of it—when father would take rows and we would take rows, and he would keep calling to us and asking us Church questions: "What is the gospel?" I can remember that question when I was just a little fellow, my daddy asking it as we were hoeing the corn. You can't get away from things like that.

At the end of the year, he would gather us three boys around the table in the dining room. We each had a notebook, and we would figure out the tithing. You know, on the farm it isn't like getting a monthly check. We figured what the chickens had produced, and what the garden had produced; and if a calf was a year older than at the beginning of the year, then we would figure its growth and the added value; and then after we had gotten everything all figured out, Father would always throw in a little for good measure, so that we would be sure that we had paid a full tithing.

Do you suppose that any one of those three boys who sat around that table year after year with that kind of leadership would have ever ended a year without being a full tithe payer? Well, you know where I am. I am the middle one of the three; both of the others have been mission presidents; they are both patriarchs today. I tell you, there is no substitute for what you get from a father who sets the example. You know the little story that "he stepped in his father's footsteps all the way."

"I would trust you anywhere. . . ."

I left home as a young man and came to the city here to board and go to school; and when my father came to town and stayed with me, he would put his arms around me and say, "My boy, I never thought I could trust one of my boys in the big city."

(Of course, it wasn't as big then as it is now.) Then he said, "I would trust you anywhere I would go myself." It was just like putting a steel rod up my backbone. How could I let my father down?

One of my boyfriends said, "If I didn't believe there was a God, and I didn't believe that some day I would have to answer for what I do here on this earth, I couldn't break the commandments because of the respect I have for my father."

Just another little thing about how Daddy trained us boys: You know, in the country town where I was raised, the greatest sport the boys had was to go buggy-riding in the afternoon on Sunday with their girls. Of course, my brother and I could never go buggy-riding because Father was a member of the stake presidency, and we had to set an example. One day we went to Father, and we said, "Now, man to man, Father, why can't we buggy-ride on Sunday like these other boys?" Father didn't want to deprive us of anything, but he said, "Now, I'll tell you boys what you can do. You can leave one of the best teams home any day of the week you want, and you can quit work at noon and come home and clean up, and then you can go buggy-riding." Wouldn't we have looked pretty buggy-riding around in the middle of the week when no one else was buggy-riding? Can you imagine our asking the girls to go buggy-riding with us under those conditions?

Well, these are just some of the little things that tied us together to that daddy of ours. I walked into my father's apartment when he was just about 90 (he died just a few months before he would have been 90), and as I opened the door, he stood up and walked toward me and took me in his arms and hugged me and kissed me. He always did that. I received letters from all over the Church when I kissed Father here on the stand once after I became the Presiding Bishop. Taking me in his arms and calling me by my kid name, he said, "Grandy, my boy,

I love you." You can't get away from love like that, can you?

Now, that is what it takes to make families in which the children will all be married in the temple, and in which they will all serve the Lord. I thank God with all my heart that all of mine are active in the Church and holding positions of responsibility, because Mother and I have tried to set the example. And you have to do it. You can't go golfing on Sunday and then expect your children to go to Church and expect to raise them in the Church. You have to go with them. You have to set them the example.

The Church will show the way

That same spirit carried forward in this pageant of ours. We were told that there would be our parents, and there would be the Church to show us the way. My, the work that is being done in this Church to try and raise boys and girls! And we are raising many of them far above the standards of their own homes. We had one mission president (and that was at a time when we didn't have so many missions) who reported to the General Authorities in the temple that he had 18 elders in his mission who came out of inactive Latter-day Saint homes. They weren't there because of the leadership of their parents, but because of the influence of the Church upon their lives and the influence of their young associates. Incidentally, he said that in 15 of the homes, the parents became active while these boys were in the mission field. I could understand that.

When I was president of the Southern States Mission, I shed many a tear reading the letters that came in from my missionaries, some of which went like this: "President Richards, I just had a letter from Mother. She said Father has quit his tobacco. He has started attending his priesthood meetings. He is getting ready so that when I come home, we can all go to the temple together."

It is like a two-edged sword. It cuts at home as well as it does in the mission field. I visited with that particu-

lar mission president a short time ago up in Canada, and he said, "Brother Richards, in the case of 12 of those 18 families, the parents came up with their autos and met their missionaries when they were released and had their families with them, and they went through the temple for the first time."

The Church is doing a tremendous job. When I was the Presiding Bishop, we used to like to know what the boys thought of their leaders, so when we attended a stake conference, we would have the boys tell us what kind of a man they liked for a bishop. It might interest some of you bishops if you were to try an experiment of that kind.

I remember one little fellow out here in the Granite Stake. He said something like this: "We boys like a man for a bishop who doesn't think that a boy is just a pain in the neck." You know, I thought that was a wonderful sermon. I used to tell the boys that if any of them had fathers who felt that way about them and if there were any way they could trade them off, they ought to get rid of them like you would an automobile.

Right attitudes

We have to have the right attitude. I am going to give you two more illustrations.

When I was back in Washington some years ago, I overheard one of our Mormon men who was standing in line to get in a theater; and he got in conversation with the man next to him and found that he was from Utah. He said, "Then you are a Mormon, aren't you?" He said, "No, I am not a Mormon." And this man who asked him thought he was afraid to own up to it, so to make it a little easier he said, "Well, I am a Mormon. I thought all of us from Utah were Mormons." Then the other man added, "I was once, but I am not any more." "How come that you are not?" "Well," he said, "when I attended Aaronic Priesthood meeting one night, one of the good brethren threw me out by the nape of the neck, and as I went out I said, 'If you put me out of here, I will never darken the

door of your church again.' And he did, and I never have."

I am afraid that if I had been there and had been big enough, there would have been two going out instead of one. I think the wrong man was put out.

I want to show you just a little contrast to that. I went over here on the west side of town to attend an award night when I was the Presiding Bishop; we had a program, and then we went in the cultural hall for a banquet, and it was beautifully spread with nice linen and silverware. I sat with the stake president next to me; and there was a place for the bishop next to me on the other side, but the bishop wasn't there. Finally he came in and sat down. He nibbled a little at his food and then pushed his plate away. I turned to him and said, "Bishop, what's the matter?" "Oh," he said, "one of the boys talked during the closing prayer, and I spoke to him about it, and it offended him. He grabbed his hat and away he went." He said, "I followed him home. I stayed with him until he had apologized to me, and I had apologized to him, and we are both back together."

You see, there wasn't anything lost, since that wound had been healed before it calloused over. The only thing lost was the bishop's appetite, and he could make that up.

"I am proud of our youth"

Now, brethren, I am proud of our youth. I have stories by the dozens about how they have brought us

honor, and I love them; I love the work that you men are doing for them, and what this Church is doing, and I trust that there will be no fathers whose boys will not be able to look up to them.

We had a miller come to our town when I was a boy. We used to take a load of wheat to the mill and get credit for it, and then we would go and draw on it for our mush and for shorts for pigs, etc. A new miller came, and I went up to get a grist, but had no credit, and he wouldn't let me have it; he didn't know me. I said, "Well, you check up on my father," and I gave him the name.

A few days later, I went up with a load of wheat, and I said, "Did you check on my father with the owner of the mill?" He said, "Yes, sir." I said, "What did he say?" He said, "The next time one of those sons of George F. Richards comes to this mill, if he wants the mill, get out and give it to him."

Fathers proud of sons

Fathers may not all be able to hand down to their sons in the way of money, stocks, and bonds; but I want to tell you that when you can hand down a name to your boys, so that they will be proud to say, "He is my father," then you will be doing what God, the Eternal Father, expects you to do with these sons who are entrusted to your keeping.

May God bless each one of you, I pray, and leave you my blessing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown

Of the First Presidency

My dear brethren, seen and unseen: I am conscious of a whole army of men out there in various wards and branches and stake houses who are tuned into this meeting and have listened to what has gone on.

I am sure all of you have been inspired and blessed and lifted up. I am sure the message from our President, David O. McKay, has found lodgment in the hearts of all, and I

trust that each of us will carry from this meeting a resolution and a determination not to let him down, to show him our love and our support and our loyalty by doing the things he has asked us to do and the things we know we ought to do.

We have all been inspired too by the splendid message given by Brother Lee, and in the absence of the President, I just want you to know that it is not