

## Bishop Robert L. Simpson

*Of the Presiding Bishopric*

My dear brethren of the priesthood: With you I thrill at the testimonies of these young men of the Aaronic Priesthood.\* How grateful we are for the testimonies of youth and for the great spirit that they carry. Dennis, Mark, and Jeffery, we thank you. We are grateful for the strength of youth. Oh, that three billion people could be receptive to these testimonies and know what the gospel of Jesus Christ can do for the youth of the world!

**"Living Water"**

You know, brethren, throughout history men have always been looking for the easy way. There have been those who have devoted their lives to finding "the fountain of youth," a miracle water which would bring everlasting life. Today men are still seeking for similar treasures, some magic "fountain" that would bring forth success, fulfillment, and happiness. But most of this searching is in vain, because they are looking for shortcuts. Unless they turn to him who offered the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well a drink of "living water," then their searching will indeed be in vain, for he told her: ". . . whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14.) It is only this "living water," the gospel of Jesus Christ, that can and will bring a happy, a successful, and an everlasting life to the children of men.

The "living water" that the Son of God offers is a set of divine principles. These principles are proven principles—they are priesthood principles which, when applied, can result in the blessings of eternity. How well you and I learn and practice these priesthood principles is not just important, young men; it is *everything*. Everything worthwhile in your life, everything

you hope and dream for, is embraced in priesthood principles.

**The tragedy of Cain**

The scriptures tell of some who have tragically disregarded priesthood principles. In the very beginning we can see Cain, a man whose birth gave his mother a great deal of joy, for she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord. . . ." (Moses 5:16.) However, Cain departed from the principles taught to him by his parents and began to love Satan more than God. "And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him.

"And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free. . . ." (Moses 5:32-33.)

Cain's observation of a newfound freedom was false doctrine straight from the adversary. In reality he enslaved himself to a life of deceit and a life "shut out from the presence of the Lord. . . ." (Moses 5:41.) Cain brought this tragedy to his own life by disregarding priesthood principles. He refused to be his "brother's keeper," and in so doing he sold his soul to the father of lies and murder.

**Saul's disobedience**

We can also look to Saul, the promising young ruler of Israel who had every requirement of a great leader. Yet Saul disobeyed priesthood principles. He was given specific instructions by a prophet of God to lead the armies of Israel against the city of Amalek. But Saul rationalized and compromised those instructions. He acted on his own volition. He did that which he reasoned should be done rather than that which the prophet Samuel had instructed him to do.

On subsequent occasions Saul further violated priesthood principles, but just as with Cain, these misdeeds brought only tragedy and sorrow. Finally, Saul took his life by falling

\*Three youth speakers at the priesthood session were Jeffery Smith, a deacon from the Oak Hills (Provo, Utah) Ward; Mark Peterson, teacher, Las Vegas (Nevada) 27th Ward; and Dennis Spackman, priest, Lewiston (Idaho) 2nd Ward.

upon his own sword during a battle with the Philistines.

While the disregarding of priesthood principles has and does bring anguish and sorrow into people's lives, obedience to the principles of righteousness is that "living water" which brings a life of everlasting joy and fulfillment. The scriptures tell of many who have drunk of this "living water" and received everlasting joy. One of the prime examples of a man who knew the value of adhering to priesthood principles and had the courage to live accordingly is Noah.

### Man free to act

In the face of ridicule and even at the peril of his life, Noah remained steadfast to the principles of the priesthood. The scriptures describe Noah's devotion in these simple, straightforward terms: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." (Gen. 6:22.)

"And thus Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; for Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God. . . ." (Moses 8:27.) Noah tasted of the joy of life because he adhered firmly to the principles of righteousness.

In our time the distinction is just as clear; the "living water" on the one hand, sorrow and tragedy on the other. As the Lamanite prophet Samuel declared, ". . . for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

"He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you." (Hel. 14:30-31.)

### Sure test of truth

The choice seems clear and obvious, but the sure test of truth must be applied by each of us. We must apply the principles of the priesthood in our own lives. To be taught truth is not enough. We must participate to be sure

of the doctrine, to be certain of its truth. Only practice can bring peace of mind and that personal testimony which enables some to stand and declare, "I know that God lives." Young men, if you take just one thought home with you tonight, let it be this: There stands not one man who speaks this kind of assuring testimony who did not have to first earn that right by compliance to priesthood principles.

Young men, no greater security can ever come into your life than the strength and power that comes through personal testimony. Your parents cannot give it to you without your co-operation. Neither can the Lord force it upon you, for that would be a violation of an eternal law called free agency.

### Rules of the game of life

Yes, that is the name of the game, free agency, and you are the team captain. You must direct the action in your life; and to do it intelligently, you must decide where the goal line is. You must decide which "plays" will work best to achieve that goal. Each day should mean another point or two scored in your favor. Which direction is the goal you seek? Why don't you think of a few major goals this very moment—can you think of one or two? Now ask yourself this question: "What are the rules in this vital game of life?" There is only one worthwhile direction. There is only one set of rules, and we meet here tonight to better understand that direction and those rules, for they are centered in priesthood principles.

### Choosing life's goals

What do you young men who hold the priesthood of God really want out of life? What do you see that is really worthwhile on that goal line that you are striving to cross? Would I be right in assuming that you would like a good portion of happiness in your life? Why, of course you would. Of what value is freedom to you, or perhaps peace of mind? I am certain that Heavenly Father would also like to see happiness be your lot, for he has said: ". . . men are, that they might have joy." (2 Ne. 2:25.)

Did you know that the gospel could guarantee freedom, for "the truth shall make you free"? (John 8:32.) The Savior of the world, I am sure, was talking about peace of mind when he said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27.)

Would you be interested in a guarantee of good health and physical strength to carry you along life's highway? There are some dramatic promises contained in the eighty-ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Those who will observe God's rules of health may have all of those promises fulfilled.

Is knowledge one of your goals? The gospel teaches that man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge, and I am sure the Lord would have you use that knowledge intelligently, for "the glory of God is intelligence. . . ." (D&C 93:36.)

Are you interested in a financially sound future? You can be, if you stay out of debt and spend wisely. This has been the counsel of the Church leaders from the beginning.

Most young men of the Aaronic Priesthood would rather be industrious and progressive than lazy. The welfare plan of this great Church tells us to reenthroned work as a ruling principle in our lives and to abolish the dole, which is a something-for-nothing program. There is no place for it in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Then, of course, you would have as a goal the practicing of pure religion, undefiled, caring for the widows and the fatherless. Heavenly Father has given us the law of the fast, that the unfortunate might be provided for, and also a declaration that inasmuch as we do it unto one of the least of these, we have done it unto him; pure religion, undefiled, all a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ and implemented in the law of the fast.

### Rewards of conformance

We are all just human enough to ask the questions: What is in it for me? Is it worth the effort? What will the end result be? If the word of the Lord

means anything to us at all, then the reasons for compliance are overwhelming, for in the seventy-sixth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord tells us explicitly about those who conform to priesthood principles in this life. May I quickly review some of the conditions and rewards that will most certainly be yours as you decide to conform and then do something about it. The seventy-sixth section of the Doctrine and Covenants says your friends and associates hereafter will be just like you:

Those who receive the testimony through compliance.

Those who were baptized in the right way by the proper authority.

Those who kept the commandments and received the Holy Spirit as a constant companion.

Those also who, with you, prepared themselves for entrance into the House of the Lord, there to be "sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise" for all eternity to those who are nearest and dearest, the family unit.

Yes, it is they to whom the Father has promised all things.

It is they who will be anointed—priests and kings of the Most High.

It is they who will receive of his fullness and of his glory.

This remarkable revelation further continues that "they are gods, even the sons of God." Does that mean anything to you? Is that worth striving for?

It states that all things are theirs, and "they are Christ's." As though that were not enough, it further states that they "shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever." Indeed, "These are they who are just men made perfect, whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God." (See D&C 76.)

### Compliance with priesthood principles

I challenge you Aaronic Priesthood bearers to commit yourselves here and now to such a reward hereafter. How can anything be more important than this? The very next time you are faced with the decision of going along with

the crowd in something that seems questionable or standing firm in what you know to be right, just remember that you are a priesthood bearer. Your commitment is to God; you must never defect to the enemy—you must remain above such things. By so doing, you will find new strength. You will be given new power. You will discover the deep-down joy that comes with compliance to priesthood principles.

I testify to you that there is no suc-

cess, no joy, no true fulfillment for us in this life or in the eternities unless our lives are in compliance with priesthood principles. This is the "living water" which can and should be a "well of water springing up into everlasting life."

I testify of the divinity of Him who offers the "living water" through compliance with the principles of the priesthood, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Elder Mark E. Petersen

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

I would like to talk with you tonight about the relationship we have to our Father in heaven and the great responsibility we have of living in such a way as to be worthy of that responsibility and that great opportunity.

The sad plight of today's world is but a reflection of the willfulness and selfishness of mankind.

And sad to say, both willfulness and selfishness in the last analysis are born of deep, dark ignorance, which is nothing less than amazing in this enlightened age.

#### **Mankind drifting aimlessly**

As a race, mankind is drifting aimlessly, with no overall purpose, and the reason most people have no real purpose is that few of them know the basic facts of life—who we are, or even why we exist.

These are unanswered questions for many, and as a result they seek activities which in many respects are harmful to themselves as well as to their fellowmen.

With no understanding of the deeper meaning of existence, some sink into almost brute-like conditions where they almost sadistically destroy each other.

That is why we have riots.

That is why we have crime.

It is the basic reason behind immorality, and to a large extent is responsible for much of our drunkenness, with all its sorrow and distress.

It is why man's inhumanity to man continues to make countless thousands mourn.

#### **World of contrasts**

We are in a world of peculiar contrasts.

We live in what is doubtless the most affluent period of the history of man, and yet in our midst we have poverty and starvation.

Similarly, we live in what is probably the greatest period of intellectual—and certainly the greatest period of technological—advancement the world has ever known.

But in the midst of it all there still remain roots of ignorance that stimulate selfishness and breed crime, violence, war, and every other abuse.

#### **True purpose of life**

If man understood his true purpose in life as it is revealed in the gospel, and if he knew the secret of his origin, he could begin to free himself from the shackles of this ignorance.

Who are we?

What is the purpose of our existence?

Can a man who thinks that life came about by chance on a globe that was made by accident have any overlying purpose to guide him?

Can a man who thinks he evolved from the lowest forms of life have any lofty aspirations?

Does the idea that we are descendants of ape-like ancestors inspire us to any great heights of achievement?

The importance of having purpose in life cannot be overstated.

The discovery of an obvious purpose in creation is what now begins to