

Bishop Victor L. Brown

Presiding Bishop

A story is told in the Book of Mormon of 2,000 young men who responded to the call of their country to take up arms in its defense. Their leader's name was Helaman. They became known as the sons of Helaman. We read of them in the book of Alma.

"And they were all young men, and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

"Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him." (Al. 53:20-21.)

The lives of these exemplary young men are an inspiration to the youth of today. They displayed the traits of character needed so desperately today.

As I think of the sons of Helaman in relationship to our youth, I am impressed that many of the young men of this generation are endowed with the same traits of character as those of Helaman's time, and that there is even more danger today.

War between good and evil

At the present time, there are wars and rumors of wars. Yet, may I suggest that there is another war currently going on in the world—a war more destructive than any armed conflict—yes, a war between good and evil, between freedom and slavery, between the Savior and Satan. Satan's legions are many. In their battle to enslave mankind, they use weapons such as selfishness; dishonesty; corruption; sexual impurity, be it adultery, fornication, or homosexuality; pornography; permissiveness; drugs; and many others. I believe Satan's ultimate goal is to

destroy the family, because if he would destroy the family, he will not just have won the battle; he will have won the war.

Notwithstanding this influence among men, it is my conviction that a generation of youth is preparing for this battle as no generation has ever done before. I firmly believe the youth of today understand clearly, more clearly perhaps than their parents, the importance of the family. Just the other day a young lady said to me, and she was talking of so-called "responsible" parents as well as others, "Why can't parents realize how important the family is?"

May I emphasize that when I refer to this generation I include girls and boys, for if a generation is to thrive in righteousness, and if family unity is to be preserved, the boys must have the same standards and nobility of character as the girls. There is no double standard in the eyes of God.

Service projects

It is impressive and inspiring to see the many young men and young women of this generation who are endowed with the same traits of character as the 2,000 youth in Helaman's time: traits of honesty, courage, willingness to serve, etc.

Take for instance the 12- and 13-year-old deacons who raised money to buy lumber so they could build a doll house for a child in a fatherless home, or the young teenager who was addicted to drugs and sought the help of her Laurel class president, one of her peers. This president, through kindness, encouragement, and the work of other class members, helped this girl to freedom.

The examples are numerous. Some girls on their own initiative made a quilt for the baby of a blind couple.

Another group of young people in one ward were concerned about the elderly and visited them, offering to run errands, etc. In this same ward one elderly couple reported that every time it snowed, some person whom they did not know cleared their driveway.

A counselor in a bishopric who was responsible for the deacon-age youth lost his life in an accident. The deacons quorum president, 13 years old, immediately called a presidency meeting. As a presidency they called on the widow, assuring her that she need not be concerned about completing duties around the home or yard, but could count on all those duties being done.

In another case, a 12-year-old nonmember, motherless girl from an unfortunate environment was befriended by her peer group of Beehive girls and was made to feel welcome, wanted, and loved. Their adviser commented, "Many of the girls seemed more concerned about her happiness than about their own."

Another class of teenage girls, upon learning of a physical disability of a neighbor, did her home canning for her. A group of young teenagers spent nine months writing, rehearsing, and preparing a readers theater—the subject by their own choice, "How Do I Know God Really Cares About Me?"

Probably none of these activities would ever make the headlines; however, they are strong evidence that this generation of youth has the character to fight this battle against the forces of Satan.

Aaronic Priesthood MIA

A few months ago something wonderful happened. The Lord through a prophet gave a revelation pertaining to this generation of youth such as has not been given to any other generation. The foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is revelation—ancient and modern. Our message to the world is that God lives; the heavens are open; and he, the Lord,

speaks through a living prophet, President Harold B. Lee. It was through this process that the Lord directed that the Aaronic Priesthood MIA organization be established. It was inaugurated in the Church on September 1 of this year. In the short time since then, reports indicate that exciting things are happening in the lives of youth as they begin to understand the significant and important principles involved in this change. These are:

First, the programs and activities of youth between the ages of 12 and 18 have now come under the umbrella of the Aaronic Priesthood. In other words, the programs and activities for both boys and girls are now priesthood oriented. They have priesthood leadership which draws them closer than ever before to the very lifeline of the Church.

Second, it means involvement of youth to a degree never before experienced. The youth, with shadow leadership from adults, will plan and execute their own programs and activities.

Third, the activities of youth will be service as well as activity oriented. This means personal service to others, not just games and parties.

Fourth, the entire effort of the Church is now individual boy and girl oriented—not program oriented. The welfare of the individual is the important factor.

Fifth, the Aaronic Priesthood MIA is committed to strengthening the family, recognizing it as the basic unit in society and the most important unit in all eternity.

Now I should like to discuss in more detail some of these principles which are vital to the raising up of a generation of righteous, stalwart young men and women in these, the last days.

Priesthood oriented

What does it mean to be priesthood oriented? The priesthood is the power to act in the name of God. The

young men who hold the priesthood are organized into quorums with a president and two counselors. In the case of the priests, the bishop is president assisted by a group leader. The presidency presides over the other young men of their same age. As a presidency they are concerned with the total well-being of each member of their quorum. If the president has been properly introduced to his responsibility in the quorum, he will know he has been called of God through inspiration. He will know the bishopric prayed about his call beforehand. What stronger motivating force could a young man have than to know he is called of God?

To illustrate, one deacons quorum president, missing one of his quorum members at meeting, called him on the telephone. The boy's father, an elder, answered the phone. He was negative, not caring about his son's activity. This deacons quorum president immediately called the elders quorum president and said in effect, "You've got a problem, and so have I." He asked the elders quorum president to please labor with the father as he labored with the son and to report his progress.

Do we catch the significance of peer leadership as well as the example of a young man being true at all times in whatsoever thing he was entrusted?

Girls program

How about the girls? The bishop calls and appoints the class president of each age group. The president then chooses her counselors who are approved by the bishopric. These class presidencies also receive strength in knowing their callings have been inspired.

A 17-year-old girl, going through the trauma of having only one parent in the home as well as the normal problems of adolescence, was called to be president of her Laurel class. Her response to this responsibility was, "I have never been so excited and thrilled about the Church in my life. I love it

with all my heart and love every minute I have the privilege of serving." Then she made another statement equally impressive. She said, "Since having received this call and having felt the responsibility, I have wanted to purify and refine my life so that I would be worthy of the call."

And yet another example of a young president. May I quote her adviser: "The other night when I took a few of the girls home after our meeting, the Beehive class president was the last girl in the car and wanted to talk about her new calling to be a youth leader. When the bishop visited with her about her responsibilities, he emphasized the importance of her being an example to her class members. As we talked, she mentioned that she had always attended church meetings and kept the commandments but was concerned that her family did not hold family home evening. She knew that she should be involved in family home evening if she were to be an example in all things. She talked to her father, but he was still reluctant to bring the family together on Monday nights. As an alternative, so that she would feel good about fulfilling her responsibilities to her peers, this 13-year-old girl had been reading the Book of Mormon each Monday night."

Shadow leadership

Do we as adults see the powerful, motivating force when young people realize the tie they have with the priesthood? No wonder exciting things are happening as the youth are allowed to lead out under the wise direction of adult leaders. The greatest and perhaps the most difficult adjustment will come to these adults who are now to be shadow leaders. They must have the patience and the sensitivity to stand in the shadows watching the youth grow and develop—a little painfully at times. Nevertheless, these leaders need to stand back and yet have the insight to know when the opportunity is right to

take advantage of those choice teaching experiences which come occasionally, but come only once. I pray that adult leaders everywhere will work diligently to become this kind of shadow leader.

Earlier we talked about the increased emphasis on service. Youth today want meaningful, spiritual experiences. They will have them through service to others, not the kind that causes great excitement, but the kind that is simple and plain and good.

From what has been said I hope we all see the importance of the individual. Surely programs and activities are important, but they are important only as they influence for good the lives of individual boys and girls.

Strengthening the family

Finally, the Aaronic Priesthood MIA is committed to strengthening the family. The Church in no way intends to take the place of the family. Its entire effort is to strengthen the family. Parents, the greatest responsibility you will ever have is the responsibility for your family. We plead with you: love your children. Be interested in them. Be an example to them. Teach them correct principles. Bless them with discipline when appropriate and afterwards show forth a greater measure of love. I believe with all my heart that our sons and daughters have all the potential of the sons of Helaman if we as parents with the support of the Church will do our part.

Elder Mark E. Petersen

Of the Council of the Twelve

The Savior taught with many parables, and they are well known. But he also taught with pertinent and piercing questions. One of them was this: ". . . what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26.)

This is particularly important when we realize that the Lord defined

May I paraphrase from Alma:

"And they are all young men and women, and they are exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold this is not all, they are men and women who are true at all times in whatsoever thing they are entrusted.

"Yea, they are men and women of truth and soberness for they have been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him."

May the Lord bless this royal generation that they may achieve that which he has foreordained for them, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Without announcement following Bishop Victor L. Brown's address, the Tabernacle Choir sang "Thou Art Repose."

President Harold B. Lee

We hope you bishops of the Church can catch the thrust of the enthusiasm of your file leader. The youth of this Church are going to be taken places and lifted by that kind of leadership. We have just listened to Bishop Brown who is the Presiding Bishop of the Church.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve, who will be our concluding speaker.

eternal life as the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Teachings of Savior

Each one of us has a soul to save. Each has the opportunity to obtain eternal life. Since our souls are so pre-