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I wonder how many of you young men and men who are a little older have heard the story of the man in the brown leather jacket. A famous surgeon received a phone call one night from a doctor friend who said he had a young child on the operating table and needed the surgeon's help in order to save the child. It was a long drive across town to the hospital and the surgeon drove as fast as he could with safety. As he pulled up to a stop sign, a man wearing a brown leather jacket opened the door and slid in beside him with his hand in his pocket as though he had a gun. The man was excited, demanded the surgeon's car, and obviously was in no mood to discuss it. The surgeon stood helplessly on the highway as the man in the brown leather jacket sped away in his car.

By the time the surgeon finally arrived at the hospital, it was too late. The child had died only moments before. The other doctor asked the surgeon to come with him to meet the child's father in the hope that together they might offer him words of comfort. As they entered the waiting room, the father came forward—he was the man in the brown leather jacket.

It occurs to me to wonder whether any of us here tonight are, in a different sense, men in brown leather jackets, who, through our lack of wisdom, perhaps not knowing it, certainly not wishing it, keep spiritual help from reaching our children when they need it. Or if we are young, we are tempted to follow a course that could damage the children that we will one day have.

Models of true manhood

This great meeting tonight is not only exciting and encouraging in its evidence of the tremendous priesthood potential in the kingdom of God, it also

manifests the capacity of the Church to exercise a powerful influence in helping to meet one of the most vital needs in the world today, and that is supplying models of true manhood for boys who are on their way to becoming men.

The absence of fathers from their homes, for one reason or another, and the lack of father-image and influence in the lives of boys are obvious factors in the large troubles that face our society. My firmly-held conviction is that in the homes of the Church, and through priesthood leadership in the Church, the problem is correctable; the challenge can be met, if we will.

Only God knows the worth of a boy, but we too are fathers, and we have an inkling. A boy is priceless not only for himself, but every individual is a kind of an omnibus carrying with him all the past that has gone into his making, all the potential in him for influencing the present, and he has, in addition, the sobering reality to face that he carries within himself the seeds of the future. Under every normal circumstance there will be one day those who call him father, and to them and their future he has a great and solemn responsibility.

Boys learn from men

Boys need men to learn from, men to be with who understand their need for activities that are challenging and socially and spiritually constructive and that stretch them and give them a chance to learn manly skills, men to love and who love them, men who are models of what a man ought to be. The father should be the first line of strength, and a boy blessed with such a father is fortunate indeed. But of course even such a family can use all the supportive influence they can get from good men

who genuinely care. But what of the boy who has no father, or whose father is not presently supplying what a father uniquely can give? To help him, the Lord has provided what I believe to be the finest program the world has ever known—a program of bishops and counselors, advisers, teachers, Scoutmasters, leaders, home teachers, coaches—strong men who really care. If the Lord's program is effectively operating, literally no boy in the whole Church should be without the blessing of choice men in his life, and every boy will, in fact, have several good men actively concerned for his well-being. I rejoice in the wonderful ward in which we live and in the great men who are interested in my son and the other lads they lead.

Now, it should be said that we have no lack of appreciation for the wonderful influence of mothers and other noble women in guiding boys—and no one in all the world is better qualified than I to understand that—but it takes men to make men. Even mothers cannot do it by themselves, and certainly none should have to undertake the effort alone; nor can schools or other institutions supply the need. Boys need men!

Implications for fathers

The implications of this for fathers and for men who hold the priesthood are clear indeed. In many homes, in every neighborhood, in every community, in every ward and branch of the Church, there are boys who need the help of men, mothers who need men to help their boys.

Is it fair to ask what will happen if boys don't get what they need from good fathers or conscientious men whose blessing it is to help them? The answer is that they must improvise or learn from other youth as ignorant and inexperienced as themselves. They will learn on street corners or in school corridors where success may be measured in terms of physical, sexual, or economic

proress instead of in terms of character and quality relationships.

Now, brethren, if we need to do better than we are doing, and wish to do better, what program shall we follow? There is time here tonight to consider only the beginning of one answer among many, but that is a vital answer, and it needs to be understood.

Alma's message to Helaman

In chapter 36 of the book of Alma in the Book of Mormon is a remarkable lesson for every father, or for those who stand in place of a father. To his son Helaman, Alma bore a strong testimony of faith and repentance. Remember that Alma, in youthful rebelliousness, had made some serious mistakes. He wanted his sons to avoid those mistakes and to find what he, Alma, had discovered of the tender mercies of God, without the terrible, painful experiences through which he had gone. In this deeply honest account Alma bore record of the torment through which he had passed and shared with Helaman three great messages which every father would want to deliver to his own son. I deliver them tonight to my son and invite you to join me:

1. "And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.

"And I would not that ye think that I know of myself—not of the temporal but of the spiritual, not of the carnal mind but of God." (Alma 36:3-4.)

Then Alma added something, and so do I:

2. "Yea, and . . . I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also

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be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

“. . . And now behold, O my son, the Lord doth give me exceeding great joy in the fruit of my labors;

“For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God.” (Alma 36:24-26.)

But these messages were not enough. There is a third:

3. “But behold, my son, this is not all; for ye ought to know as I do know, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land; and ye ought to know also, that inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence. . . .” (Alma 36:30.)

So a father testified to his son.

Teaching our own children

How foolish we are if we reserve to ourselves, or for others than our own children, the knowledge and testimony of the gospel we have gained. They, no less than others, need and deserve this from us.

Is it possible that some of us are in some measure men in brown leather jackets in this matter?

Do you remember that many of the most powerful teachings in the Book of Mormon are from fathers directly to their beloved sons? Lehi, Jacob, Benjamin, Alma, Helaman, Mormon, and others all taught wonderful lessons to their own sons.

Do you recall Alma's son Corianton and the sad mistake he made? He was proud, stubborn, willing to excuse himself because many others had also sinned. Alma plainly identified the seriousness of his son's actions, called him to repentance, taught him the mean-

ing of Christ's atonement, gave him a path to follow, and spoke the message of his heart:

“And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities.” (Alma 39:12.)

In this marvelous lesson for sinners—and those who seek to help sinners—are some of the saddest and most moving words that I know from a faithful father who had tried to do missionary work in the very area where his son had been immoral: “. . . when they saw your conduct, they would not believe in my words.” (Alma 39:11.)

Nephi's love for father

There are other accounts in the Book of Mormon, of course, like that of the boy who heeded his father's teachings and who made up his mind early in his life about what he really wanted. He wrote these words (You know him!):

“I Nephi, being exceeding young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God . . . I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father. . . .” (1 Nephi 2:16.)

Nephi performed many great tasks, and one I remember best was his help to his father who had murmured when the company lost its hunting equipment and faced starvation. Nephi, you will remember, had himself been blessed with marvelous spiritual experiences, but he loved his father so much that, instead of criticizing or taking over, he helped him regain his self-respect and confidence by going to his father and asking Lehi to inquire of God where he, Nephi, should hunt. With that support, the older man found his

faith and was again able to lead his people. The story itself is a minor incident in the Book of Mormon, but the lesson is not minor. It is no small thing to reestablish confidence and faith in a man at a critical point in his life when he has failed and is full of self-doubt.

So the scriptures are one remarkable and perhaps largely untapped source of strength for choice young men on their way to adult influence and responsibility, and for those who are now charged to guide them. How well are we using the source?

Liability in failure

Fiorello LaGuardia, an Italian immigrant to the United States, became one of the most respected and influential mayors in the history of New York. Early in his life, while he was a magistrate, a man was convicted of theft in his courtroom. The young judge felt compelled to impose a sentence of imprisonment. But when the man explained that he had stolen food to feed his impoverished family, the judge suspended the sentence and then levied a fine on every person in the courtroom for living in a city where a man had to steal bread to feed his family.

One wonders if some such liability may not, in justice, one day be imposed upon parents and teachers and other adults in the Church who have failed to feed our young the bread of life for whatever reason.

Automobile without key

Perhaps both boys and men will understand the analogy of an automobile which a young man desperately wanted and which his father promised him on his birthday if he merited it. "Just go with sensible people and do sensible things," said the father, "and on your birthday I'll see that you get the kind of car you want." The automobile was described in detail, with all the equipment a boy could imagine. So he

went with sensible people, and did sensible things, and prepared himself, hoping almost beyond hope for the big day. It arrived. He looked out the window of the house and saw the car of his dreams sitting there. It had everything on it which he in his imagination had conceived. He could scarcely contain himself with love and appreciation. He ran from the house, looked it over, and then went back to his dad for the key.

"The key?" said the father. "Oh, the key. Well, I'll tell you. The car is yours. I've been preparing you for it for a long time. It is very valuable and very important, and I know you'll make very good use of it, but for now I'll keep the key. I'll let you know when you can use it. You can tell everybody it's yours, but don't use it."

Boys need more than a promise and more than a name; they need to be permitted to test their strength, to use their abilities, to use their priesthood.

Responsibility of young men

You young men, of course, have a very great responsibility in these matters also. Many of you have been wonderfully blessed with gifts from the Lord and with opportunities to enjoy and use them. Your sense of appreciation, your respect for the blessings of God, your mature acceptance of responsibility, and your wonderful service, your sense of humor—they all strengthen and encourage us and make us very proud.

It was only a few days ago that a great stake president told of his distress when his son got a C- on his report card. He took the boy into the study and showed him the card. "What do you see on this card?" he said sternly. "Well, Dad, I see three A's," the boy said. I suppose a father has to be aware of the C's and that it is in the nature of the boy to see the A's. In understanding this, both will be additionally blessed.

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Now let me finish, if I may, with two very brief accounts of two great fathers.

A father's support

A young lad stood at the pulpit in Sunday School trying to give an assigned talk, but he could not get the words out. His giant of a father walked from the congregation to stand beside his son, put his arm around him, and said, "I know Larry has prepared his talk and that he'll be able to give it. He is a little frightened, so I'll just speak to you for a moment and then I know he'll be ready." The father stood by his boy with his arm around him, and in a moment the lad gave his talk. And many wept.

A while ago I met a special boy, and this week I had the privilege of spending some time with him and his family. This boy has muscular atrophy. He is a remarkable young man, loved by everyone in the ward. He has always wanted to do the things the other fellows do. He has succeeded in Cub Scouting. He is now a First Class Scout and is progressing.

While Jay was a deacon, he passed the sacrament with the others. He can't walk or stand on his feet, so his dad lined up with the other boys, holding Jay with his strong arm around his waist and helping him hold the tray, since his hands are not strong enough to support it. Jay's father thus assisted his son from row to row as he passed the sacrament. Jay did a great job as a deacon collecting fast offerings too. His dad carried him from door to door. Can you imagine that scene on the doorstep?

Jay bears a strong testimony; his attitude and outlook are amazing. He gives talks and does well. He has sung in Church, and always when he does these things, his dad is there to hold him in his arms and stand by him and support him.

In all my life I never heard a sweeter story nor a more moving one. God bless such a father, and God bless such a son, and God bless us who have so much and who have yet a little time, that we may take another look at our boy or at the boy who needs some additional help outside his home. God bless you boys to appreciate your dads, to be patient and gracious and forgiving. God bless us all, boys and men, now and in the future, always to act in a way that will help others enjoy the special blessings God wants them to have.

The unspoken sermon

Fathers, priesthood leaders, young men need models. The unspoken sermon is heard most clearly and learned most strongly by those near at hand. It is not through definition or diatribe that young men acquire values. "They do not learn ethical principles; they emulate ethical (or unethical) people. They do not analyze or list attributes they wish to develop; they identify with people who seem to have them." (John Gardner, *Self-Renewal*, p. 124.) What boys need is not lectures about notions of love, human relationships, or God—but to be exposed to unconditional love, unselfish service, to the reality of God in reverence, and worship, and humble prayer. And that is why they need models of what a man at his best can be. Will you young men, as I sit down, hear these words of Moroni:

"Condemn [us] not because of [our] imperfection. . . but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been." (Mormon 9:31.)

And to those a little older, these words from ancient times:

"For how shall I go up to my father and the lad [is] not with me. . . ." (Gen. 44:34.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.