

Bishop H. Burke Peterson

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I've been impressed and amazed as I have met with and observed the Aaronic Priesthood young men throughout the Church. I've noticed there are always those of your number who have an unusual sense of dedication, who will do whatever is necessary in order to be true to the trust placed in them as sons of God, who will do whatever they need to do to bear his name in honor and dignity, to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to be the example he would be, to act as he would act.

Prospective missionary

I met one such young man not long ago while I was attending a stake conference in another country. We were about to conclude a Saturday afternoon meeting with the stake presidency when a knock came at the office door. The president opened it, and I saw a hand give an envelope to him. It had my name on it. The letter inside introduced me to a young man who needed an interview in order to be accepted as a missionary.

As soon as our meeting with the stake presidency was concluded, I excused them and invited the young man in. His initial appearance shocked me. I couldn't believe he was being recommended to go out and serve as a missionary. His clothes were somewhat wrinkled; he needed a shave; he reeked with tobacco smoke; he even had some sort of paperback book rolled up in his hands. What could he offer in the service of the Master, I thought.

And then it happened—he walked over and shook hands with me. As I looked into his eyes, I was electrified. He was different. He was special, in spite of his outward appearance. As we sat down he told me his story. He first excused himself for appearing to be un-

tidy and in a hurry. He said he had just gotten off the bus after a 13-hour ride from his home and, if I didn't mind, he hoped he would be able to be back on the bus in another hour for another 13-hour ride to his home.

I then began to put two and two together. I knew now why his clothes were wrinkled and why he needed a shave. I knew the tobacco smoke was not of his choosing, but from the close confinement in the bus. I made another observation. That paperback book in his hand was the Book of Mormon—well read, well used, a priceless possession. He went on to say that three years ago he had joined the Church because of his association with our young people. He said they were different. His parents had given him permission if he wanted to, but warned that if he did, he would no longer have a bed in their home. He could no longer live with them as their son.

When he was baptized, his father kept his word and opened the back door, telling him never to return. The young man didn't. He moved in with friends. He told me that for the past three years he had been working and going to school. He said he had saved over \$2,000 to keep himself on a mission. Please, could he go, he said; he wanted to more than anything in the world. The impression of the Spirit said yes, and he's now part of the army of 18,000 stalwarts who are out covering the earth as servants of the Master.

Ways to do right

Yes, there are those of your number who will make no excuse for doing as a priesthood holder of God should do. There are those who will find ways to do what is right and expected of them, in spite of others around them who may try to turn them away from

the straight path. There are those who are your friends who will find ways to go on missions because it's right.

School has started for almost all of you. Unfortunately, there are some of your number who, this school year, will find it easier to follow the crowd, *even when the crowd is wrong*. There are some who don't understand that there is *no right way* to do something wrong.

My young brethren, we are all a part of a great battle that is covering the face of the earth—a conflict between the brethren of the priesthood and the legions of Satan. It's a very real battle. Many are wounded or die spiritually every day. The casualty list of our own is most tragic. It's interesting to note in this battle the strong always survive.

Saying "No"

You know it isn't hard to recognize a real warrior for the priesthood. You meet him at every turn. He is the one who says no when others say yes to movies on Sunday, to R- or X-rated shows at any time (he knows he must not fall to this temptation). He's the one who says no to immoral books or magazines or pictures or stories at any time. He says no to fishing or swimming or boating on Sunday. He's the one who says no when others say, "Just try it," to a beer or a cigarette—even if it's just one. This courageous warrior is also the one who says yes when others say no to priesthood meeting Sunday morning, to sacrament meeting, to tithing, to prayers each day, to seminary or institute classes. This stalwart young man is one who says yes when others say no to a mission.

It's too bad, but you will also meet at many turns each day those who are *helping* Satan in his grim work to destroy. And you can easily recognize them too: they will show lack of courage; they will show lack of backbone, if you please, when it comes time to say no to something that is not right.

Graduation party

Recently, in fact last spring at the end of the school year, there was a high school graduation in a community here in the West. Several appropriate parties were planned for the graduates. However, there was one party that sort of sneaked into the lineup that was wrong. It was bad. In this case several shows of an immoral nature had been planned at a local residence. Not knowing beforehand the nature of the movies, a group of unsuspecting Latter-day Saint young people went to the home for the party. As soon as the film started to run and its vulgar message came to the screen, part of the Latter-day Saint young people got up and left, while others of the same group stayed in the home.

When outside, the few who were leaving met some of their friends just arriving. They told them of the nature of the show and recommended that they not go in. Part of this group then turned and left also; however, a few of the weak went into the home, there to have their minds saturated and polluted by the power of Satan. Yes, there are those who will do whatever they need to do to be right with the Lord, to do right. There are those who really believe that holding the priesthood is special, important, something really worth honoring.

May I tell you, brethren, it's worth doing whatever we must to be approved by the Lord. And I say this, knowing it isn't easy to be made fun of and to be laughed at when you do what is right. Many times it isn't the popular thing to do to go against the crowd or to do differently than one or two friends. May the Lord bless and strengthen you young brethren as you meet this challenge.

Serving young people

May I also say to you who are members of ward bishoprics and branch presidencies, there are those of your number who *really believe* that, outside

their own home, their greatest and most important priesthood responsibility is with the Aaronic Priesthood. Brethren, there are those among you who make no excuses for doing what they should, who find a way to spend their prime time in Church service with the young people of their ward or branch. You will notice as we do, because of their personal involvement, that their young people have a very special spirit about them, a spiritual alertness, and a strength that will easily compare to Helaman's 2,000 stripling Ammonite sons. We see them often in the many stakes of the Church each weekend.

Work of bishoprics

You will see these great brethren of the bishoprics on every turn also, and you will recognize them as brethren who understand their stewardship because they will be the ones who are letting the Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders function in their callings as leaders, letting them take the lead in sending the priesthood brethren into every home. We call it home teaching—the priesthood in action.

You'll recognize them because they are letting the Lord select the Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies. These bishoprics have studied and understand the ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants. After careful consideration, they present the names of the quorum officers to the Lord for his approval, *before* talking to the parents or to the young man.

These great brethren are the ones who make the quorum presidency call to the young man in a dignified manner: never on the phone or in the hall or on the front porch, but in the bishop's office by the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood of the ward.

Training young men

You see, this type of bishopric has the vision of what properly called and trained Aaronic Priesthood quorum

presidencies can mean in the life of a boy and for the future of the Church. Think of it, brethren, a new generation of Melchizedek Priesthood leaders in ten or twenty years who are being taught proper priesthood principles now by their presiding officers, the ward bishopric.

You will recognize this bishopric with ease because they are the ones who are actually training these choice young men weekly in proper priesthood principles. They are always in the Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings on Sunday with the young men. This bishopric will be found calling Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents "president" during the priesthood meeting times.

Yes, you can spot right off the bishopric who know *their chief responsibility from the Lord* is with the Aaronic Priesthood—with no exceptions. They know that other things may not get done, but the work of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Young Women must not suffer, it must not fail. They know they will one day answer to the Lord for this sacred trust and stewardship.

Stake program

Brethren, you can also recognize the stake president who knows what it is to be chairman of the Aaronic Priesthood committee of his stake. It's interesting to observe his actions too. He hasn't released his counselor or the high council brethren from their efforts as he assumes the chairmanship of this committee, but rather he now takes a more personal interest in the committee work. He becomes alive not only with interest but with involvement in the Aaronic Priesthood program of his stake as he joins hands with the other great brethren of the stake committee.

He is the stake president who knows that Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders and Aaronic Priesthood quorum leaders must join hands as they work together to help fathers with their sons. He knows that an elders quorum president and a deacons quorum

president and a father, properly trained and motivated, can be an unbeatable combination in the battle with Satan for the life of a boy.

This stake president knows that young women are as important to save as the young men. For this reason and many others he lets the stake director for the Young Women know that she has direct access to him, as he is her file leader in the work with the Young Women.

Ways to do better

Brethren, there are ways to do better what we're doing, to be better than we are. The priesthood we hold as young men and older men is the authority to perform our duties in the same way the Savior would if he had our individual responsibility. Our authority is limited to doing it the way he would—to be the kind of deacons president the Master would be; to be the kind of teacher the Master would be; as a priest, to prepare for a mission the way he would; to strive to be the kind of elders quorum president, bishop or counselor or stake president the Savior would be if he had that office and calling and responsibility.

Or, most important of all, our priesthood is the authority to be the kind of father, son, or brother the Savior would be if he were in our family.

Priesthood power

Brethren, our success in the priesthood depends on the pattern of our

Brethren, our success in the priesthood depends on the pattern of our life. When we learn to be led by the Spirit, then the priesthood authority we have will become priesthood power, the power to change lives for the better, to cause miracles to happen in the lives of boys and girls and fathers and mothers.

In a world of conflict and trouble there will be the giants among men. There will be the peacemakers. There will be those who can calm troubled waters. There will be those whose life's pattern will be as a beacon on a hill, as a lighthouse in a storm. There will be those who others will look to for strength and guidance. You can be that ray of hope to those around you, especially to your own.

Remember, the brightest light and the clearest signal come from the cleanest instrument. May the Lord guide us and strengthen us as we purify and cleanse our lives. I bear testimony to you, my brethren, that I know God lives. I know he's in the heavens. And I pray that he'll bless us to honor the priesthood he's given us, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Bishop H. Burke Peterson of the Presiding Bishopric has just addressed us.

We shall next hear from Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy. He will be followed by President Marion G. Romney, second counselor in the First Presidency.