

**President Kimball**

We shall now appreciate hearing

from President N. Eldon Tanner, first counselor in the First Presidency.

## President N. Eldon Tanner

First Counselor in the First Presidency

My dear brethren, I stand before you this evening in all humility and humbly pray that the Spirit and blessings of the Lord will continue to be with us as I speak to you. What a glorious privilege it is to hold the priesthood of God—from the newest deacon in the smallest and most distant branch of the Church, to the high priest holding the highest office in the Church. As such we have made certain covenants with the Lord and are entitled to his many promised blessings as we keep those covenants and walk uprightly before him.

### Story of convert

The other day I was talking to an enthusiastic returned missionary who had been a member of the Church for only five years, and this is the story he told me, which I found most interesting.

He said he was raised in a good home by fine parents with high ideals; but he had never thought of, let alone been told, many of the things which the Church teaches, such as a prophet of God being on the earth today, of a literal resurrection where the body and soul will be reunited after death and continue on throughout eternity, and particularly of the beautiful and most important concept that he was literally a spirit child of God. He had never been taught of the restoration of the gospel, that there was a living personal God, and that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, lives; that he was literally the Son of God in the flesh.

While working at a summer resort where a number of young people were employed, and where all seemed to be having a good time, this boy's attention was drawn to three young men who seemed to be living apart from the

others and not participating in the smoking, drinking of alcoholic beverages, and using drugs, etc. They were living very high standards in every way and seemed to be morally clean.

He said, "I became attracted to them and engaged in conversation with them to find out why they were different. They told me they were Mormons, that they observed a Word of Wisdom, which they explained to me, and that the Lord had said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' (Exod. 20:14), and that sexual transgression was considered by the Church as one of the most grievous sins."

He said further, "I became very close to these young men and liked what they taught and the way they lived. They were very free in telling me about the Church. They seemed to be proud of it and were not ashamed of the fact that they were not living as other young men were living. They did point out, however, that some of the young men who were members of the Church and living in the camp were not living the principles of the gospel."

I thought how sad it was that these other members were not living as they should, had succumbed to temptation, and were not strong enough to stand up for what they knew was right. If they had been converted and *not* ashamed of the gospel of Christ and its teachings, they too could have been influencing some others for good and changing their lives in preparation for ultimate blessings promised to the faithful.

### Blessings of gospel

My friend continued, "One of the three young men was a returned missionary, and as I became more interested, he taught me the gospel as he

had taught it in the mission field. I corresponded with my parents and told them what I had found. They were very disappointed and unhappy; but when I returned home and told them all about it, and they saw the good effect all this had on my life and the change in habits, they gave me permission to be baptized, for which I was most thankful."

He was just 19 when he joined the Church. He went on to say what a great privilege it was when he was given the Aaronic Priesthood and he was able to administer and pass the sacrament in remembrance of the Lord's crucifixion. He said it made him very humble as he felt the sacredness of this ordinance, and he always tried to be worthy and well-groomed and to act as the Lord would have him do were he standing by his side.

He felt greatly blessed when as a priest he was given the privilege of baptizing new members, realizing that this gave him the same privilege and authority that was given to John the Baptist who baptized the Savior. And as he talked, I wished that every young man could feel and realize just how important that is and what a great privilege it is to be able to perform these ordinances and know that the Lord depends on all of us to live worthy of and magnify the priesthood which we hold.

### **Missionary call**

Then this young man said how pleased he was a year later as he was interviewed to go on a mission to be able to tell his bishop and stake president that he was keeping the Word of Wisdom strictly, keeping the Sabbath day holy, paying his tithes and offerings, and keeping himself morally clean in every way, and that he really honored womanhood and had never treated a girl friend differently from the way he would want a young man to treat his sister. He felt so good about this and was so very glad that he could go into the mission field as an ambassador of the Lord, feeling that the Lord would

approve his going as his representative. He told of the glorious feeling he had as he baptized and confirmed his first convert.

These were humbling experiences for him, he said, as was also his being called upon to confer the Melchizedek Priesthood upon a man and ordain him an elder. He realized how important it is that a man be worthy of these privileges to act in the name of the Lord and that the man he ordained was just as much an elder as if the president of the Church had ordained him. He felt most humble and grateful to the Lord.

He concluded by telling me that he was going to be married soon, and his countenance beamed as he expressed his gratitude and happiness that he and his sweetheart were clean and worthy to go to the temple where they could be sealed for time and all eternity.

Then I said to him: "No greater privilege or responsibility can be placed upon any young man than for him to be given the priesthood of God, which is the power of God to act in his name. And now you will enjoy all the added blessings and privileges that will come from being sealed by the holy priesthood in the temple of God."

### **Worthiness for priesthood**

Too many young men today who have been raised in the Church seem to take the priesthood for granted and feel that it is a right rather than a privilege for them to hold the priesthood. Many seem to think it is smart to break the Word of Wisdom and be loose in their morals. I want to emphasize that the Lord is not pleased with this. It is most important that a young man live worthy of that priesthood and that he not be advanced until he is worthy.

He must also be prepared and worthy before receiving a call to go into the mission field. I cannot imagine an executive of any great corporation choosing and authorizing a person to represent the company and making any kind of contract unless that person has

proven himself knowledgeable, capable, and worthy—one on whom the executive can depend entirely.

It is even more important that one representing the Lord, speaking in his name, be equally worthy. I am sure the Lord is greatly pleased with all those who are prepared to do the things that make them worthy and who are prepared to stand up and be counted and defend the Church and the gospel of Jesus Christ by bearing testimony of the truth and denouncing evil and unrighteousness. He is equally disappointed and grieved when those who have made covenants with him fail to keep them, just as he grieves for any of his children who fall by the wayside.

I want to assure every young man that as we keep our covenants we will be happy, more successful, loved, and respected even by those who do not believe as we do and who may ridicule us. They expect us to keep our covenants and our commitments, to stand up for our beliefs, and to be different. This fact has been evident so often when a member of the Church is found guilty of any crime. It is pointed out that he is a Mormon or a member of the Mormon Church while the religious affiliation of others who may be involved with him is never mentioned.

### **Responsibility of leaders**

Let me emphasize to our leaders that it is our responsibility and privilege to work closely with these priesthood holders and with prospective priesthood holders. Through our teachings, worthy example, and testimony, we must help them to understand the gospel and their responsibilities and the importance of living according to the teachings of the gospel.

Let the boys know that you love them and will do all in your power to help them succeed and be happy; but always remember that no young man should expect to be advanced in the priesthood or given a temple

recommend or receive a call to go on a mission unless he is living worthily and is prepared to continue to live worthy of the gospel which he has embraced and magnify the priesthood which he holds. It is no kindness to advance anyone in the priesthood or give him a temple recommend if he is not worthy or to send him on a mission in order for him to repent and adjust. Rather, he should prove himself worthy before he is called. The Lord wants worthy representatives.

### **Importance of honesty**

Now let me repeat to the young men that it is most important that they be honest in every way. Some have lied to their bishops and to their stake presidents in order to go into the mission field or to go to the temple. Such are certainly not worthy of these privileges. The Lord will not be mocked.

Leaders, find out from the prospective missionary what he thinks the Lord wants of him as a representative. Never hesitate to make a searching interview so that you will know if he is worthy or is guilty of any transgression and how he feels about a mission call. Then together consider how the Lord would feel about it and then act accordingly.

It is just not fair to anyone to send a young man into the mission field who is not qualified or worthy. He cannot get the spirit of his calling. And while he is in the mission field he is a burden to the mission president and a deterrent to the missionary work. I know how heart-rending it is for a mission president to have to excommunicate and send a missionary home because of transgression.

If a young man is guilty of transgression, let him know that you love him and that you are prepared to help in every way possible to get him back on the track. Remember that Satan is on the loose and his cohorts are striving with all their might to lead these young men and women astray. Al-

ways be prepared to encourage, guide, and help direct these young people to live according to the principles of the gospel. Be determined that no boy or girl is going to be lost because of your neglect.

### Cases of transgression

Now, regarding the transgressor: Every mission president, stake president, and bishop is directed and instructed how to investigate and handle all cases of transgression. A person who is guilty of a serious transgression cannot progress, and he is not happy while the guilt is upon him. Until he has confessed and repented he is in bondage. The transgressor who is dealt with as he should be, with love and with proper discipline, will later express his appreciation for your concern, your interest, and your leadership. As he is properly dealt with, he is in a position to repent and come back to full activity. *But he must be dealt with.*

Be aware of those who are not active in the Church, and if you feel that something is wrong or that someone is guilty of transgression, it is your responsibility to go to him with love and find out about it. He will appreciate it, and by moving promptly you may be able to prevent further transgression. Save the person who is having a problem and bring him back into the fold.

It has been reported to me that some bishops and even stake presidents have said that they never have excommunicated or disciplined anyone and that they do not intend to. This attitude is entirely wrong. Judges in Israel have the responsibility to sit in righteous judgment where it becomes necessary. Let me read from the twentieth section of the Doctrine and Covenants an important reminder to those who have the responsibility of judging: "Any member of the Church of Christ transgressing, or being overtaken in a

fault, shall be dealt with as the scriptures direct." (D&C 20:80.)

### Covering up iniquities

Brethren, study the scriptures and the handbook and do as they direct and discipline the members of the Church when necessary. Remember that it is no kindness to a transgressor for his local authority to ignore or overlook or try to cover up his iniquity.

Let me read a quotation from President John Taylor wherein he discussed this subject: "Furthermore, I have heard of some Bishops who have been seeking to cover up the iniquities of men; I tell them, in the name of God, they will have to bear . . . that iniquity, and if any of you want to partake of the sins of men, or uphold them, you will have to bear them. Do you hear it, you Bishops and you Presidents? God will require it at your hands. You are not placed in position to tamper with the principles of righteousness, nor to cover up the infamies and corruptions of men." (*Conference Report*, Apr., 1880, p. 78.)

These are very strong words, brethren, and they were spoken by a president of the Church, a prophet of God. Also, George Q. Cannon makes this significant statement: "The Spirit of God would undoubtedly be so grieved that it would forsake not only those who are guilty of these acts, but it would withdraw itself from those who would suffer them to be done in our midst unchecked and unrebuked."

### Standards defined

We must live in the world but we must not become a part of it. We are different from the world. We cannot accept their modes or standards of living. We have had revealed to us the gospel of Jesus Christ, which sets out clearly what our standards should be. We have had the priesthood restored and conferred upon us. We must be exemplary in every respect. There are many scriptures

in the Doctrine and Covenants that tell us how to handle the transgressor and what our responsibilities as priesthood holders are. This one especially I call to your attention:

"Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.

"He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand." (D&C 107:99-100.)

In the scriptures it is abundantly clear that the cases which are to be handled by the Church include, but are not limited to, fornication, adultery, homosexual acts, abortion, or other infractions of the moral code; criminal acts involving moral turpitude such as burglary, dishonesty, theft, murder, apostasy; open opposition to and deliberate disobedience to the rules and regulations of the Church; cruelty to spouse or children; advocating or practicing so-called plural marriage; or any unchristianlike conduct in violation of the law and order of the Church.

### Concern for sinner

If you leaders do as the Lord admonishes, he will bless you, strengthen you, and direct you, and you will find great joy in his service. It is most important, however, that when a person *is* disfellowshipped or excommunicated you show great love and concern and put forth every effort to help him clear up his life and return to full fellowship in the Church.

We read in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will

confess them and forsake them." (D&C 58:42-43.)

Let me emphasize to all assembled, wherever you may be this evening, it is our responsibility to save souls. We as leaders must do all within our power to lead our members in the right paths, to keep them strong in the faith, to let them know that we love them, that every soul is great in the sight of God, that we are spirit children of our Heavenly Father, and he stands ready to bless us. We have the responsibility to work closely with parents and with their children to see that they keep themselves morally clean and worthy members of the kingdom of God and prepare themselves for the kingdom of heaven. But never become unnecessarily intimate with any of the opposite sex.

### Witness

In a few minutes we will be instructed by the president of the Church, a prophet of God. I bear witness that he is a prophet of God, and that God actually lives, and that his Son Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world who came and gave his life that we might be resurrected and enjoy immortality and eternal life. We are led today by the Lord through a prophet of God, President Spencer W. Kimball, with whom it is a great privilege and honor and blessing to work. If we will follow him, we cannot go astray.

May we magnify our priesthood and enjoy the blessings of the Lord, and as President Romney said, "Prove our integrity," I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President Spencer W. Kimball

President Nathan Eldon Tanner, first counselor in the First Presidency, has just addressed us.