

Bishop H. Burke Peterson

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

My brethren, I'm especially grateful for an assignment to speak in this priesthood meeting tonight. I imagine this is the greatest assemblage of the priesthood in this dispensation. I've wrestled with a way to deliver to you a message I think is of utmost importance and of vital concern to all of our Father's children. I have prayed and do now pray for his Spirit to attend us. I testify to you that what I will say is truth, its preparation having been prompted by the Spirit. May your hearts be open and your spirits receptive.

Priesthood principles

Spiritual growth, and the happiness resulting therefrom, is based on an understanding of and obedience to priesthood principles. I believe there are many whose lives are clouded with unhappiness because we priesthood brethren have not listened as attentively as we should to the warning voice of the Lord. As he tells the brethren, there are dangers when we misuse the priesthood. We have all read the following revelation many times. May I read it again and in the process relate it to the daily conduct of our lives? Quoting from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

"Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson [listen to the lesson, brethren]—

"That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness." (D&C 121:34-36.)

Authority different than power

From this I understand that there is a difference between priesthood authority and priesthood power. Power and authority in the priesthood are not necessarily synonymous. All of us who hold the priesthood have the authority to act for the Lord, but the effectiveness of our authority—or if you please, the power that comes through that authority—depends on the pattern of our lives; it depends on our righteousness. Note again, "The powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness."

May I suggest that many of us have lost sight of one of the most important reasons for our holding the priesthood. To be an effective teachers quorum president, elders quorum president, bishop, or counselor is important—we spend many hours in training these officers. To perform the vital priesthood ordinances is essential. But even more important than all these is the need to learn how to use the priesthood to bless our families and homes.

Power to bless families

If we live for it, ours can be a power given us from our Heavenly Father that will bring peace to a troubled household. Ours can be a power that will bless and comfort little children, that will bring sleep to tear-stained eyes in the wee hours of the morning. Ours can be the power that will bring happiness to a family home evening, the power to calm the unsettled nerves of a tired wife. Ours can be the power that will give direction to a confused and vulnerable teenager. Ours, the power to bless a daughter before she goes on her first date or before her temple marriage, or to bless a son before his departure for a mission or college. Ours, my young brethren,

can be the power to stop evil thoughts of a group of boys gathered together in vulgar conversation. Ours can be the power to heal the sick and comfort the lonely. These are some of the important purposes of the priesthood.

When we have the power to bless families in some of the ways mentioned, then we are using this God-given authority for its most exalted purpose—to bind family ties and perform priesthood ordinances that will endure through the eternities. He who has developed the power and uses it to do the things we have mentioned will honestly consider the righteous desires of his family, even though they may not be exactly the same as his. He will listen to those in his home with the same attention he would give a priesthood leader. He will listen—even to the smallest child.

He will put his family's welfare ahead of his own comfort.

He will learn to control himself. He will not use a quick temper as an excuse—he will rise above it. It needn't always be with him.

He will understand that a soft answer turneth away wrath. His voice will never be heard in anger in his home; he will never punish in anger.

As one of his most significant attributes, he who has developed this priesthood power will not only by his thoughts but also by his actions give honor, respect, and dignity to the loveliest of the Lord's creations—his daughters.

Be careful and wise

Brethren, can you hear the Lord counseling his sons? Can you hear him say to us, "Be careful, be wise, with this authority I have given you"? We read further in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

"Hence many are called, but few are chosen." (D&C 121:39-40.)

Many are the brethren who do not understand what these sacred words mean:

We must not be inconsiderate;
We must not command;
We must not be dictators;
We must not become puffed up in pride.

Blessing women's lives

I would like to say something about the power of the priesthood as it can bless the lives of women. Elder John A. Widtsoe said, "The Priesthood is not bestowed on the basis of mental power but is given to good men. . . . Woman has her gift of equal magnitude. . . . A wiser power than any on earth understands why a spirit in the far off beginning was male or female." (John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government*, Deseret Book Co., 1954, p. 90.)

Men are not superior to women. However, by the very nature of some of the things we do, we imply this. The fact that a man holds the priesthood and is the presiding officer in the home, as well as in Church organizations, does not in any way make him a superior being. The priesthood is a divinely given authority and responsibility which will receive its ultimate fulfillment only when there is a devoted and happy wife at his side. Note "happy" is the description of the wife.

No man will ever be exalted by himself, no matter how great his works on the earth.

Brethren, we would do well to understand that many of the finest ideas, useful in the proper management of a family, can come from openly discussing with, and seeking counsel from, our wives. Women have a spirit and mental ability that is absolutely essential in strengthening the family relationship. It must be nurtured, however, and drawn upon by the

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presiding priesthood authority in that home. We should be gladdened, not threatened, by our wives' good qualities. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said, "I am grateful for [my wife's] traits and qualities that excel my own in some critical dimensions of our partnership." (BYU Twelve-Stake Fireside, Jan. 4, 1976.)

Sons of Helaman

May I also suggest to you that it is important for the brethren to develop the same concern for the training of girls as they have for the training of the priesthood boys. We need only refer to the experience of the 2,000 Ammonite sons of Helaman for an insight into one measure of the capacity of the women. I quote from Alma:

"Now behold, there were two thousand of those young men, who entered into this covenant and took their weapons of war to defend their country. . . .

"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."

"Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

"And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it." (Al. 53:18, 20-21; 56:47-48.)

Mothers and girls

It seems more than a coincidence

to me that when mention is made of all who could be counted as being responsible for the great valor and spirit of these 2,000 young men, the recorder felt impressed to mention only the training by their mothers. Many others might have been mentioned—mothers were. The fact that mothers are one of the keys and secrets to the strength of the Aaronic Priesthood would lead me to believe that more time must be spent by priesthood leaders in training girls in proper priesthood principles, that future Aaronic Priesthood generations might be as blessed as were Helaman's 2,000 sons.

It is evident that the brethren of the priesthood are spending a great deal of their time and effort in planning ways to affect the character and spirituality of the priesthood boys. This must continue. However, only a small fraction of this effort is put into the priesthood education and spiritual development of the girls. How can we expect in them as fine a product if we do not give them an increase in attention? Unless girls have had a model and know what priesthood qualities to look for in an eternal companion, the consequences may be that many families in generations to come will suffer because of wrong marriage choices. This need not be if priesthood brethren will be the appropriate models and give more earnest understanding and energy to the training of the girls.

A beautiful promise

And now, my brethren, in conclusion, may I continue in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

"Reproving betimes with sharp-

ness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

"That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without com-

pulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever." (D&C 121:41-46.)

What a beautiful promise! Blessed is the family that can look to you brethren as the vital conduit joining heaven and home.

I testify to you that I know that He lives, that Jesus is the Christ, 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 now hear from Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Franklin D. Richards

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brethren, we are living in a most interesting and remarkable age, when the Spirit of the Lord is being poured out on the face of the earth abundantly; but it is also an age of permissiveness, tribulations, and unhappiness, when many men's hearts are set upon worldly treasures, pleasures, and affluence.

"Seek not for riches"

One of the great challenges facing us today is to develop sufficient wisdom, understanding, and inner strength so that we can live happily and successfully in our complex and difficult world and not be caught up in the mad scramble for the material things and pleasures.

Recently, two young people and

one older man have come to me and explained that, although they are successful in a material way, they are unhappy and confused. Each asked my advice as to how he could remedy his situation.

I told them that the Lord had already answered that question when he said:

"Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich." (D&C 6:7.)

I suggested that they probably needed to change their priorities in life and seek after wisdom rather than after so many material things and pleasures.

Priorities

The problems my confused friends