

bishop has a program of giving to each boy when he's ordained a deacon fifteen dollars out of the missionary fund. Then they ask the father to match it, and then every time the boy is interviewed—for instance, when he's ordained a teacher—they check on his missionary fund. I figured, on a percentage basis, if every ward in the Church had as many missionaries in the field as that ward, we would have 55,500 missionaries. So I provided in my family that every male child who has not been on a mission has a missionary fund so he will know that he is on his mission from the time he is a boy.

God bless you all, and may we not

disappoint our great leader in sending all of our boys on missions, I pray, and I leave you my blessing, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder Dean L. Larsen of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Dean L. Larsen

I would like to speak to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood about faith and courage and about making choices. I hope what I say will help you to face the special challenges you will be required to meet in your maturing years.

Decisions and consequences

Recently I met a young man who was receiving the missionary discussions. He had read the Book of Mormon and felt he had received answers to his prayers. He was now faced with the decision of whether or not to be baptized.

This was a rather remarkable young man. He had experienced some severe tests in his life, and he had demonstrated great courage and resourcefulness. The prospect of becoming a member of the Church, however, gave him a different kind of challenge.

As we talked about this newest and most important decision with which he was faced, he asked, "Why are so many people critical of Mormons?" He then

described some of the things he had experienced at the hands of friends, family, and fellow employees for having associated with the missionaries. "I'm not sure I can live with that kind of feeling against me if I join the Church," he said. "Why can't I believe what your church teaches, but just go on being a good Christian without becoming a Mormon?"

It isn't difficult for us to know what the consequences will be for this young man if he chooses not to be baptized because of the fear of incurring ill feelings from family and friends. He is, of course, perfectly free to make this choice, but he is *not* free to determine the consequences of that decision.

We may occasionally find ourselves in situations where we are tempted to set aside our identity as Latter-day Saints while we indulge in some thought or act that is unworthy of the trust the Lord has placed in us. We are regularly required to make choices on the basis of what we know to be right. We are free in most instances to make our own decisions, but we are never free

to determine the final outcomes of our choices.

It is not enough for us to know what is right and to believe it is good. We must be willing to stand up and be counted. We must be willing to act in accordance with what we believe under all circumstances. It is of little value for us to believe one way if we behave contrary to that belief in our private actions or in our public performance.

Courage

Today it requires great courage to be a loyal Latter-day Saint. For many it is not easy, and it will likely not become easier. The tests of our day are severe. This is particularly so for you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. Being true to the way of life the Lord has given us does not always make us public heroes. Having the courage of our convictions has its own rewards, however. Armin Suckow, Jr., a thirteen-year-old boy from Germany, discovered this. He tells of an interesting experience in a letter he wrote to the *NEW ERA* magazine. Armin says, "We spoke one Christmastime with one of our school teachers about Jesus. He said that after Jesus died, he had gone from the earth and was now dead. As the teacher spoke, I thought about our church and knew that after three days Jesus was resurrected and was seen by many people. Later, then, he ascended into heaven. I had the feeling that I should tell the teacher and the students that the truth was entirely different from what the teacher had just said. The teacher didn't want to hear my opinion at all, but in spite of that, I . . . told them that Jesus was resurrected. It didn't please the teacher at all that I should correct him, but I continued. Then he said that this was simply a matter of opinion. I answered him that anyone can read of this event in the scriptures and that it is so clearly described there that no one can get a different opinion on the story than the one that I had given. After the class the teacher wanted to know to which

church I belonged. I told him that I belonged to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. On that day I had a real good feeling inside of me." ("The Savior Lives!" *NEW ERA*, Dec. 1977, p. 18.)

We have to admire Armin's decision to speak out on what he believed. It was not easy for him, but his action was consistent with what he knew to be right.

Challenges

Sometimes the challenges we must face in this life are of a very personal nature. They can result from such things as physical handicaps or similar limitations. But even these give us an opportunity to make choices that bring satisfaction and fulfillment into our lives rather than discouragement and defeat. Some of you read in the May 1976 *NEW ERA* about Stephen Farrance, who learned when he was four years old that he had a type of muscle disease that was incurable. His doctors said he would not live beyond his twelfth year. Instead of withdrawing from life and becoming a dejected invalid, Stephen pressed himself into every possible activity. His life was full of enthusiasm and optimism. He invented ways to compensate for his handicaps. He lived six years longer than his doctors had said he would; and though in his last years he had great difficulty in getting about without help, he never lost his enthusiasm, his creativity, or his sense of humor. He not only succeeded in making his own life happier and more productive, but he was also an inspiration and a positive influence to all who knew him. If you young men have not read about Stephen in the *NEW ERA*, I recommend you do so. (See Pene Horton, "Stephen," *NEW ERA*, May 1976, p. 36.)

Paying the price

Some years ago I coached a high school basketball team through a rather

unusual season. The season began with a number of disappointing losses. Some of the fans and townspeople didn't make a secret of their unhappiness over the team's failures. There was considerable public comment, and it was a challenging time for members of the team. Several of them finally became discouraged and withdrew from the team. Those who remained didn't lose faith in themselves or in their coach. The rough going seemed to be an incentive for them to try even harder.

At mid-season the team began to win their games. They qualified for the district tournament and surprised everyone there by winning a place in the state play-offs. To the amazement of everyone, they went on to win the state championship—the first ever to be won by that school!

Following the celebration and the awarding of trophies after the championship game, I drove several of the team members back to our city. There was silence during much of the ride as we each reflected on the incredible outcome of our season's efforts. Finally, one of the young men spoke. (He had been honored for being one of the outstanding players in the tournament.) "Coach," he said, "I think we were supposed to win tonight."

I was curious to know what had prompted this conclusion. "Why do you think we were *supposed* to win?" I asked.

His response was simple and direct—and I will never forget its impact. "Because we paid the price," he said.

Indeed they had, and I am sure the lessons learned by those young men during that eventful year have been valuable to them throughout their lives.

The nature of the challenges we face in this life is not nearly so important as what we choose to do about them. When we have the courage and faith to live up to the best we know, we fulfill the purpose for which we came to this earth, and we provide an incentive for others to do the same.

The young man to whom I referred in the beginning of my remarks has a very important decision to make. In the final analysis he cannot hedge on his decision. He must be willing to face the consequences of baptism and membership in the Church if he is ever to enjoy the blessings that Church membership can bring. He must be willing to pay the price. This will require much trust and faith on his part. It is so with each of us whenever we face challenging choices. You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood have a tremendous trust placed in you by the Lord, and he expects you to measure up—to stand up and be counted. All of you came here to be winners. The Lord's work will prevail, and you will have much to do with the success of his kingdom.

May God help each of us to "pay the price" so that we may one day be qualified to return to him, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just heard from Elder Dean L. Larsen of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Some memories are unforgettable, remaining ever vivid and heartwarm-

ing! One such memory was the mission conference we attended last year at