

ion. The keys and powers of the priesthood can be "handled only upon the principles of righteousness" (D&C 121:36).

God, through his prophets, has given the priesthood in recent times the great challenge to advance worldwide the holy work in which we are engaged. All worthy men may now be given the priesthood. With the coming of these inspired changes, I wonder if there has been an enlarging of attitude based upon the exalted principles the Savior taught. Has the extended responsibility of the priesthood caused us to have a better understanding of our work? Are some of us unsuccessful in differentiating between the sin and the sinner?

Many of us have sat in ward councils, priesthood executive councils, and other meetings on the ward levels. We took the time to identify the names of those who had lost their way. But our efforts to reach them could have been more effective. At times we were too judgmental. Sometimes we lost track of the individual in our focus on the program. I do not criticize the programs and activities. I am grateful for them. They are necessary. They are inspired and great. I only ask for greater concern for the individual and the family, which after all is the purpose of God's holy work. "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

May we put our lives and homes in order. We must stay true to the great absolutes of the restored gospel: namely, Christ and him crucified, the divine restoration of the gospel in our time, the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith's divine calling as a prophet of God, and continuing revelation to his successors, according to the needs of the Church and its members.

If we are united and go forward under the leadership of those who have the keys to the kingdom of God on earth, our homes will be enriched, our lives purified, and the gates of hell will not prevail against us. May we follow the counsel of Alma, and "stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

We shall now stand and sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," following which President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren, this is a glorious sight! How we appreciate the service you so willingly give to the Lord. We know God will bless you for it.

To all you young men—Aaronic Priesthood holders—we love and appreciate you. We are so grateful for your dedication and faithfulness. With all my soul, I encourage you to resolve now that you will be clean and worthy

to serve the Lord all the days of your life. Therein is true happiness.

A call to the priesthood

Tonight, I speak to all priesthood holders, you who have responsibility for our Father's children. My message is "A Call to the Priesthood: 'Feed My Sheep.'" "

Most of you are familiar with the Savior's description of members of the Church and their leaders. True followers He called sheep, and priesthood leaders He called shepherds.

We remember His unforgettable example of a true shepherd's concern for his sheep:

"If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, . . . and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

"And if it so be that he find it, . . . he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray" (Matthew 18:12-13).

A true shepherd would give his life for his sheep

In Jesus' time, the Palestinian shepherd was noted for his protection of his sheep. Unlike modern shepherders, the shepherd always walked ahead of his flock. He led them. The shepherd knew each of the sheep and usually had a name for each. The sheep knew his voice and trusted him and would not follow a stranger. Thus, when called, the sheep would come to him. (See John 10:14, 16.)

At night shepherds would bring their sheep to a corral called a sheepfold. High walls surrounded the sheepfold, and thorns were placed on top of these walls to prevent wild animals and thieves from climbing over.

Sometimes, however, a wild animal driven by hunger would leap over the walls into the midst of the sheep, frightening them. Such a situation separated the true shepherd—one who

loved his sheep—from the hireling—one who worked only for pay and duty.

The true shepherd was willing to give his life for the sheep. He would go in amongst the sheep and fight for their welfare. The hireling, on the other hand, valued his own personal safety above the sheep and would usually flee from the danger.

Christ, the True Shepherd

Jesus used this common illustration of his day to declare that He was the Good Shepherd, the True Shepherd. Because of His love for His brothers and sisters, He would willingly and voluntarily lay down His life for them. (See John 10:17-18.)

Eventually, the Good Shepherd did give His life for the sheep—for you and me, for all of us.

"Feed my sheep"

Later, after His resurrection, Jesus directed Peter to "feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep." (See John 21:15-17.)

Three times this charge was repeated to the newly designated head shepherd.

Do you think that Peter recalled the parable of the good shepherd?

Do you think that Peter could remember what a good shepherd was to be, what he was to do?

Do you think he ever questioned his Lord's example as being too idealistic?

It must have impressed Peter deeply, for tradition has it that he also willingly gave his life for the cause.

Sheep need care in Church today

The expressive symbolism of the Good Shepherd is not without significant parallel in the Church today. The sheep need to be led by watchful shepherds. Too many are wandering, some are being enticed away by momentary distractions, and others have become completely lost.

Ponder carefully these representative samples from several stakes which illustrate the magnitude of our problem.

—A stake in the eastern part of the United States has slightly over 300 Melchizedek Priesthood holders and an equivalent number of prospective elders—lost sheep!

—A stake in Salt Lake City has 1,100 Melchizedek Priesthood holders, but also 1,100 prospective elders. Where, we ask, are the shepherds?

—A stake in England has 360 Melchizedek Priesthood holders, but over 800 prospective elders, a very small percentage of whom attend their meetings. We ask, How will the sheep survive without the safety of the sheepfold and watch-care of a loving shepherd?

Loving care can bring results

We know great results can take place when the shepherds make a concerted effort and show concern.

In one stake in southern Utah, concerted efforts have been made to reactivate prospective elders. In a period of two years, over 100 men were ordained elders in the Melchizedek Priesthood. Their ordinations raised sacrament meeting attendance in the stake by 14 percent.

A stake in Arizona advanced 47 prospective elders to the Melchizedek Priesthood; another in the state of Washington advanced the same number. Both continue to use the temple preparation seminars.

The districts of one mission in Great Britain have reactivated more than 600 members with the help of full-time and stake missionaries.

A stake in South America, through prayerful and earnest efforts, reactivated 146 prospective elders in less than one year. Forty-five more are now ready for ordination to offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

We realize, as in times past, some of the sheep will rebel and "are as a wild flock which fleeth from the shep-

herd" (Mosiah 8:21). But most of our problems stem from lack of loving and attentive shepherding.

With a shepherd's care, many of our new members, those newly born into the gospel, would be nurtured by gospel knowledge and new standards. Such attention would ensure that there would be no returning to old habits and old friends.

With a shepherd's loving care, many of our young people, our young lambs, would not be wandering. And if they were, the crook of the shepherd's staff, a loving arm, would retrieve them.

With a shepherd's care, many of those who are now independent of the flock can still be reclaimed. Many have married outside the Church and assumed the life-styles of their marriage partners.

Priesthood watch-care

The problem, I repeat, is serious and considerable in its magnitude.

We offer no *new* solutions to this *old* problem. The charge Jesus gave to Peter, which He emphasized by repeating it three times, is the proven solution: "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep."

The answer, then, is found in shepherding the flock. In other words, priesthood watch-care. It is real concern by a true shepherd, not just the feigned concern a hireling might show.

Here are some questions every true shepherd should ask:

Shepherds—home teachers:

Are you watching over your families as you should?

Are you ministering to their needs?

Do you care enough about your families' welfare that you find out their interests, that you remember birthdays and special events, and that you continually pray for them?

Are you the first one to the home when the family needs assistance?

Does the head of the household call on you first?

Are you attentive to the needs of each member of the family?

When one of your assigned families moves, do you know where they have moved? Do you make an effort to obtain their new address? Have you checked with neighbors, friends, and relatives?

Shepherds—stake presidents, bishops, quorum leaders:

Are you welcoming into your ranks new converts?

Do they *feel* your love and concern?

Are new converts invited into your homes?

Do they know what family home evening is and how to use it?

Does the family feel welcome and comfortable in your midst?

Do you ordain worthy male members to offices of the priesthood following baptism?

Do you give them meaningful Church assignments?

Shepherds—stake presidents, bishops, quorum leaders:

Do you leave the ninety and nine and search after the lost one?

Do you call and appoint advisers and others who can reach impressionable youth and visit them on their "own ground"?

Have you fully implemented the youth program, and are you using this program to meet the individual needs of the youth?

Are you watchful over the young singles, the divorced, and those with special needs?

Do you carefully and spiritually prepare those who enter military service?

Are you especially attentive to young men between the transition period from Aaronic Priesthood to Melchizedek Priesthood?

Bishops, do you make sure they come under the care of their new shepherd, the quorum president?

Do you provide significant Church-service opportunities for our returned missionaries so these young

men and women do not drift into inactivity because they do not have occasion to serve as they have been doing for eighteen months?

Do you use visiting teachers to augment home teaching?

Are you teaching fathers their duties?

Do you have temple preparation seminars to encourage prospective elders to prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood and the temple?

Do you have older prospective elders assigned to the high priests and invited to join those with whom they would feel most comfortable?

Are younger prospective elders invited to participate with the elders quorums?

Some leaders say that some men are past hope, but, as the angel told Abraham, nothing is impossible with the Lord! (See Genesis 18:14.) One brother who was regarded by some as a hopeless case tearfully exclaimed to the temple worker at the sealing altar, "I don't know why I waited so long for this blessing!"

In a recent Saturday evening meeting of leaders I heard a determined brother state, "I've sure had a time with the devil since I started to become active. Prior to that time, I just went along with him."

Are we helping the one who needs help because he has started on the way back to full activity?

Shepherds—stake presidents, bishops, quorum leaders:

Are you attentive to the records of Church members under your charge—especially those who are not participating with you in meetings?

Do you obtain forwarding addresses from home teachers when members leave your midst, or are you just relieved to get them off your records and send their records to the "address unknown" file?

Shepherds—fathers in Israel:

Are you holding family prayer with your family, morning and evening?

Do you hold a regular, consistent, inspiring family home evening once a week?

Do you lead out in spiritual matters?

Is your example what it should be before those whom you lead?

Do you ask and pray for the welfare of your own?

Do you love them?

Would you give your life for them?

Shepherds—all who hold the priesthood:

We ask you solemnly to evaluate your performance in relation to these matters.

We call on you, as Paul did to the elders of Ephesus:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over . . . which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28; italics added).

We repeat to you the charge Jesus gave Peter. We repeat it with the same emphasis, the same repetition: “Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my Sheep. . . . Feed my sheep”!

We call on you to extend yourselves with renewed dedication. We want you to do something you have not been doing. We want you to watch, to feed, to tend, and to care for the flock and, in the event that some are temporarily lost, we challenge you to find them.

No greater work than saving souls

Why should you do this?

Because you love your brothers and sisters. You want them to have joy in our Father’s kingdom.

There is no greater work in all the world than that of saving souls. Incom-

parable joy can be yours when you bring souls unto Him!

If you will be prayerful and earnest in your desires to tend his flock, the Lord will bless you with success.

This we promise you!

God bless you, my brethren of the priesthood, watchful shepherds all, to know your flock and to be known of them. May we carefully attend and protect them so that they may remain safe and free from harm. This is our challenge, our duty, and our joy, which joy I promise to all of you as you accept the challenge and do your duty. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Benson, for that great challenge.

We note that the nationwide CBS Radio Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 o’clock Sunday morning. Those desiring to attend in the Tabernacle must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

We urge you to be careful and courteous in your driving as you leave the Tabernacle tonight. It has been storming and we hope that you will have no trouble.

The beautiful music for this priesthood session has been furnished by the Ricks College men’s choir. We are grateful to you young brethren for your inspiring music and express sincere thanks for the service you have given here tonight. We know that you have a long ride home, and we pray that you may travel safely.

Following my closing remarks, the choir will sing “Jesus, My Savior True,” following which Elder Ronald E. Poelman, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the benediction.