

President Ezra Taft Benson

What manner of men ought we to be?

My beloved brethren, I have entitled my remarks "What Manner of Men Ought We to Be?" You will recognize this title as a variation of the question Jesus posed to the Nephites. (See 3 Nephi 27:27.) It is a timely question for each member of the priesthood of God to consider.

This title is prompted by reports that have recently come to my attention about the shocking actions of some fathers and husbands, and their unrighteous actions involve wife and child abuse.

Emulate the character of the Savior

As I have listened to these reports, I have asked myself, "How can any member of the Church—any man who holds the priesthood of God—be guilty of cruelty to his own wife and children?"

Such actions, if practiced by a priesthood holder, are almost inconceivable. They are totally out of character with the teachings of the Church and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As priesthood holders, we are to emulate the character of the Savior.

The Christlike traits

And what is His character?

He has identified the cardinal virtues of His divine character in a revelation to all priesthood holders who serve in His ministry. You are familiar with this verse in section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which was given a year before the Church was organized:

"Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence" (D&C 4:6).

These are the virtues we are to emulate. This is the Christlike character.

Let us discuss a few of these traits.

Virtuous behavior

A priesthood holder is *virtuous*. Virtuous behavior implies that he has pure thoughts and clean actions. He will not lust in his heart, for to do so is to "deny the faith" and to lose the Spirit. (See D&C 42:23.)

He will not commit adultery "nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6). This means fornication, homosexual behavior, self-abuse, child molestation, or any other sexual perversions.

Virtue is akin to holiness—an attribute of godliness. A priesthood holder should actively seek for things that are virtuous and lovely and not that which is debasing or sordid. Virtue will "garnish [his] thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45).

Whenever a priesthood holder departs from the path of virtue in any form or expression, he loses the Spirit and comes under Satan's power. He then receives the wages of him whom he has chosen to serve. As a result, sometimes the Church must take disciplinary action, for we cannot condone nor pardon unvirtuous and unrepented actions.

All priesthood holders must be morally clean to be worthy to bear the authority of Jesus Christ.

Temperate in emotions and expressions

A priesthood holder is *temperate*. This means he is restrained in his emotions and verbal expressions. He does things in moderation and is not given to overindulgence. In a word, he has self-control. He is the master of his emotions, not the other way around.

A priesthood holder who would curse his wife, abuse her with words or

actions, or do the same to one of his own children is guilty of grievous sin.

"Can ye be angry, and not sin?" asked the Apostle Paul (Joseph Smith Translation, Ephesians 4:26).

If a man does not control his temper, it is a sad admission that he is not in control of his thoughts. He then becomes a victim to his own passions and emotions, which lead him to actions that are totally unfit for civilized behavior, let alone behavior for a priesthood holder.

President David O. McKay once said, "A man who cannot control his temper is not very likely to control his passion, and no matter what his pretensions in religion, he moves in daily life very close to the animal plane" (*Improvement Era*, June 1958, p. 407).

Patient and understanding

A priesthood holder is to be *patient*. Patience is another form of self-control. It is the ability to postpone gratification and to bridle one's passions. (See Alma 28:12.) A patient man does not engage in impetuous behavior in his relationships with loved ones, which he will later regret. Patience is composure under stress. A patient man is understanding of others' faults.

A priesthood bearer who is patient will be tolerant of the mistakes and failings of his loved ones. Because he loves them, he will not find fault nor criticize nor blame.

Kind and gentle

A priesthood bearer is *kind*. One who is kind is sympathetic and gentle with others. He is considerate of others' feelings and courteous in his behavior. He has a helpful nature. Kindness pardons others' weaknesses and faults.

Emulate Christ's way of life

Can you see how we become more Christlike as we are more virtuous, more kind, more patient, and more in control of our emotional feelings?

The Apostle Paul used some vivid expressions to illustrate that a member of the Church must be different from the world. He commended us to "put on Christ," "put off . . . the old man," and "put on the new man" (Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:22, 24).

What does that mean to us as brethren of the priesthood?

It means that we must become like Jesus Christ. We must emulate His way of life in our lives. Of necessity, we must be "born again" (John 3:3) and put aside worldly lusts and former behavior unsuited to the Christlike character. We must seek the Holy Ghost to temper our actions.

Desire a righteous and virtuous life

How is this done?

As I've thought about the serious sins that some of our brethren have committed, I've wondered, "Did they seek the Lord to help them overcome their emotional outbursts? Did they rely on fasting and prayer? Did they seek a priesthood blessing? Did they ask our Heavenly Father to temper their emotions by the influence of the Holy Ghost?"

Jesus said we are to "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (3 Nephi 12:6). To do this, we must earnestly desire a righteous and virtuous life.

Call upon God and give away all sins

I cite for you an example of a man whose life was changed to a more Christlike life after he earnestly desired such a change and sought the Lord's help.

Lamoni's father was a king who had bitter enmity toward the Nephites. A great missionary by the name of Aaron—one of the sons of Mosiah—had come to the Lamanite nation to bring them the gospel. He proceeded to the king's home and subsequently engaged him in a gospel discussion about the purpose of life. Once the king became receptive to his message, Aaron

taught him about Christ, the plan of salvation, and the possibility of eternal life.

This message so impressed the king that he asked Aaron, "What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy" (Alma 22:15).

Aaron instructed him to call upon God in faith to help him repent of all his sins. The king, anxious for his own soul, did as Aaron instructed:

"O God," he prayed, "Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18; italics added).

Now I want you, my brethren, to hear again this humble man's words: "I will give away all my sins to know thee."

Brethren, each of us must surrender our sins if we are to really know Christ. For we do not know Him until we become like Him. There are some, like this king, who must pray until they, too, have "a wicked spirit rooted" from them so they can find the same joy.

Act as He would act

Attaining a righteous and virtuous life is within the capability of any one of us if we will earnestly seek for it. If we do not have these character traits, the Lord has told us that we should "ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 4:7).

The Apostle Peter tells us that when we possess these traits we are not "unfruitful in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8; italics added).

To *know* the Savior, then, is to be like Him.

God will bless us to be like His Son when we make an earnest effort.

To be like Christ should be the righteous aspiration of every priest-

hood holder. We should act as He would act in our relationships with others.

The Lord said,

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself . . . *all ungodliness, and every worldly lust*, and keep my commandments" (see Matthew 16:24; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26; italics added).

He expects His disciples to follow Him by their actions.

The commandments to love

Now, may I say a word about our relationships with our wives and our families.

Your wife is your most precious and eternal helpmate—your eternal companion. She is to be cherished and loved.

There are only two commandments where the Lord tells us to love someone with all our hearts. The first you are familiar with as the Great Commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37).

The second commandment to love another with all our hearts is this: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt *cleave unto her* and none else" (D&C 42:22; italics added).

There are only two whom we are commanded to love with all our hearts—the Lord our God, and our wives!

Love wife and family

What does it mean to love someone with all our hearts? It means with all our emotional feelings and our devotion. Surely when you love your wife with all your heart, you cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her, nor abuse her by words, sullen behavior, or actions.

What does it mean to "cleave unto her"? It means to stay close to her, to be loyal to her, to strengthen her, to

communicate with her, and to express your love for her.

The same applies to our families. Our homes should be havens of peace and joy for our families. Surely no child should fear his own father—especially a priesthood father. A father's duty is to make his home a place of happiness and joy. He cannot do this when there is bickering, quarreling, contention, or unrighteous behavior.

Leadership in the home

As the patriarch in your home, you have a serious responsibility to assume leadership in the home. You must create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide.

You should always remember the statement of the Savior that "the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil" (3 Nephi 11:29). Never allow the adversary to be an influence in your home.

Change of attitude and behavior

Now, brethren, I have spoken plainly. I do not wish to offend anyone, but there needs to be a change of attitude and behavior on the part of some who claim membership in the Lord's church but who act in an un-Christlike manner.

As holders of the priesthood of God, we must be more Christlike in our attitude and behavior than what we see in the world. We should be as charitable and considerate with our loved ones as Christ is with us. He is kind, loving, and patient with each of us. Should we not reciprocate the same love to our wives and children?

I opened with the question "What manner of men ought we to be?" You remember the Lord's answer is this: "Verily I say unto you, *even as I am*" (3 Nephi 27:27; italics added).

He expects us to be like Him. He expects us to demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit in our lives which are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Christlike traits to permeate home

These Christlike traits should characterize each priesthood holder and should permeate every Latter-day Saint home. It can be done and must be done if we are to honorably bear His name.

Never in the history of mankind has there been a greater need for men to be united in their determination and actions to be Christlike in character.

To follow Him is to emulate His character.

Resolve to "put on Christ"

Let us not leave this priesthood meeting tonight without a firm resolve to put aside any action that is foreign to the nature of Christ.

Let us resolve to apply the traits of our Lord and Savior in our own lives.

Let us as priesthood brethren have His image in our countenances. (See Alma 5:14, 19.)

Let us "put on Christ"!

He is our Savior, our Redeemer, and our Great Exemplar.

This is my fervent witness as I invoke the blessings of God upon each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Benson, for that timely and important message.

For those of you who plan to come to the Tabernacle for the morning session tomorrow, you must be in your seats before 9:15 A.M. because of the broadcast.

We are grateful to the men of this combined choir for the inspiring music which has added so much to this service. Following my closing remarks, the choir will sing "Ye Who Are Called to Labor," following which Elder Angel Abrea, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the benediction.