

lives of the people we come in contact with, but he also blesses us. I know that the gospel he has given us is true. That's why I wanted to share it—because it means so much in my life.

I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

I never felt so short, as I was looking at the length of his legs. Thank you, Devin, for that tremendous testimony.

Elder J. Thomas Fyans

Attaining physical excellence

Major league teams hire scouts whose job it is to continually survey the young upcoming players. Their trained eyes look for players who have consistently superior performances. It is not by chance that these young men are singled out from the rest. There is much preparation that goes into the attaining of excellence.

Such an athlete spends many years in training, trying to perfect every part of his performance. He exercises for long hours. He is careful to eat nutritional foods that build muscle tone, recognizing that what he takes into his body will have an effect upon his physical stamina. He obtains the proper amount of rest and observes other health laws. Attaining physical excellence in his life has been given top priority. Daily, weekly, and yearly goals are set and given great dedication. He listens carefully to his coach, who watches every movement he makes and knows his performance better than he does. Together they study videotapes of his plays and even analyze the minute details of his abilities through the graphics of a computer. He is careful to keep up with any new innovation or philosophy. As he retires at night, his thoughts turn once again to scrutinizing his performance with an

I know that every boy here tonight was lifted by reason of what you have said, knowing something of what you have done.

We shall now hear from Elder J. Thomas Fyans, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy—also rather tall. He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, who is built for football instead of basketball.

ever-constant vision of the day when he will receive an invitation to become a member of one of those elite teams that constitute the world of professional athletics.

Who's on the Lord's team?

We sing a hymn, "Who's on the Lord's Side?" What does the word *side* mean? The definition of the word *side* is one of the contesting parties in a game or sport; one of a group of players; a *team*.

Based on this definition, the question "Who's on the Lord's *side*?" could appropriately be rephrased "Who's on the Lord's *team*?" Some of the lyrics that might be appropriately applied to the priesthood are:

Who's on the Lord's team? Who?
Now is the time to show;
We ask it fearlessly:
Who's on the Lord's team? Who?

We serve the living God,
And want his foes to know
That if but few, we're great;
Who's on the Lord's team? Who?
We're going on to win,
Nor fear must blanch the brow;
The Lord of hosts is ours;
Who's on the Lord's team? Who?
(See *Hymns*, no. 175.)

Serving on the Lord's team does not happen by chance. President Spencer W. Kimball has told us, "This is something we are heir to; we were born to it, and all we need to do is qualify for it to obtain this blessing" (*Priesthood* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981], p. 2).

An eternal calling

In Alma 13:1 we learn that "the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order."

In verses 3 and 4 we are told that "this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they have chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling. . . .

"And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren."

In Alma 13:9 we are told, "Thus they become high priests forever."

As you participate on a basketball team, or are part of a drama presentation, or sing in a quartet, or join a Scout troop, you are aware that membership in these groups usually lasts just a few months, or at most a few years. As there is a beginning to participation in these groups, there is also an end. And yet, as Alma taught us, we are high priests forever. The priesthood is eternal.

Example of President Joseph Fielding Smith

Now, you young men, let's carefully consider some examples from the

lives of our prophets as they have spiritually prepared for the priesthood. President Joseph Fielding Smith shares with us his feelings in these words: "When I was a small boy, too young to hold the Aaronic Priesthood, my father placed a copy of the Book of Mormon in my hands with the request that I read it. I received this Nephite record with thanksgiving and applied myself to the task which had been assigned to me. There are certain passages that have been stamped upon my mind and I have never forgotten them.' By the time he was ten years old he had read the Book of Mormon through not just once but twice. His brothers remembered of his hurrying to get through his chores as quickly as possible, and sometimes even leaving a ball game early, and secluding himself in the hayloft or in the shade of a tree to get back to his reading of the book" (Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., and John J. Stewart, *The Life of Joseph Fielding Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 57).

President David O. McKay

President David O. McKay tells: "I remember as a deacon chopping wood for the widows on Saturday. We met as a group of nine boys, held a short meeting, took our axes, went to the widows, and chopped enough wood for each to last that week."

And President McKay continues: "As a priest, I recall administering the sacrament and my failure the first time I offered the prayer. We did not have the prayer on a printed card before us then as is frequently the case now. We were supposed to memorize it. The sacrament table was just under the pulpit, and my father, the bishop, always stood right over the one who asked the blessing upon the bread and water. I thought I knew the prayer, but I had memorized

it privately, and when I knelt and saw the congregation before me, I became flustered" (*Cherished Experiences*, comp. Clare Middlemiss [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 190). This challenge did not cause him to become discouraged, my young friends. He made additional preparation and lifted himself to a level of excellence.

President Kimball and the Bible

President Kimball recites the following story about a goal he made when he was still a young boy: "When I heard a Church leader from Salt Lake City tell us at conference that we should read the scriptures, and I recognized that I had never read the Bible, that very night at the conclusion of that very sermon I walked to my home a block away and climbed up in my little attic room in the top of the house and lighted a little coal-oil lamp that was on the little table, and I read the first chapters of Genesis. A year later I closed the Bible, having read every chapter in that big and glorious book.

"I found that this Bible that I was reading had in it 66 books, and then I was nearly dissuaded when I found that it had in it 1,189 chapters, and then I also found that it had 1,519 pages. It was formidable, but I knew if others did it that I could do it.

"I found that there were certain parts that were hard for a 14-year-old boy to understand. There were some pages that were not especially interesting to me, but when I had read the 66 books and 1,189 chapters and 1,519 pages, I had a glowing satisfaction that I had made a goal and that I had achieved it.

And he continues: "I am not telling you this story to boast; I am merely using this as an example to say that if I could do it by coal-oil light, you can do it by electric light. I have always been glad I read the Bible from cover to cover" (*Ensign*, May 1974, p. 88).

Reached Book of Mormon goal

Nearly every week I attend a stake conference somewhere in the world, so I am not able to attend the Gospel Doctrine class in my ward where the Book of Mormon is being taught this year. It really pained me to miss this privilege of catching the spirit of this very sacred other testament that Jesus is the Christ. So my wife and I set a goal to study the Book of Mormon at home. We determined to finish the 1984 course of study for the Gospel Doctrine class before this April general conference. We began in January; and on Monday, March 12, we finished the last of the forty-six lessons of the Book of Mormon course. It really felt good to accomplish this goal.

Spiritually exercise for priesthood fitness

You young men from all over the world are preparing to become members of a team. You have looked forward to this day with great anticipation. Hands have been laid upon your head to bestow the priesthood of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, that you might stand in His place in administering the sacred ordinances to the children of men. Think about it for a minute.

My companions in the priesthood, I love you with all my heart; the General Authorities all love you. We would invite you to spiritually exercise each day. This you would do at the level of your choosing. For example, read the Book of Mormon a few verses a day, or a chapter a day, fifteen minutes a day, or thirty minutes a day. You will know the amount of spiritual tone that you need to gain. You can accept this challenge, can't you?

You've made the team, the Lord's team, because of your superior, dedicated performance. What a privilege is now yours as you *exercise* with service and love, *build your endurance* as you prayerfully confront life's challenges, and *partake of nutritional spiritual food* as you read and ponder the scriptures to

build and maintain your spiritual stamina and muscle tone. Make your priesthood fitness a priority, applying the constant dedication of a professional athlete until it consumes your life, until it flows from you with nerves and mind conditioned.

And as you too retire at night, your hearts and thoughts and prayers will automatically turn, once again, with great desire to the perfecting of your

performance on the Lord's great priesthood team. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Fyans.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Boyd K. Packer.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren, as a former counselor to Brother Nelson on two occasions, I add my gratitude for the call of Elder Russell M. Nelson, and affirm the nobility of his character and the greatness of his work in the kingdom. Likewise, I attest to the noble character of Elder Oaks.

"Give me air!"

I would like to tell you a story of a young man who sought out a wise man who was recognized far and near for his good judgment. He asked for his expert advice on how to attain new heights of achievement in his field of endeavor.

"Come with me," said the wise man. Taking the youth to a nearby stream, he immersed him and held him under the water. When the young man was released, he was nearly drowned and came up fighting for breath, gasping, "Air, air, give me air!"

"There," said the wise man, "that's the first lesson. When you want to succeed as badly as you wanted air, you will attain your goal. You will succeed!"

Desire essential for achievement

Desire, burning desire, is basic to achieving anything beyond the ordinary.

Why do I begin with this story? Because desire in everyone involved is the first step in the subject of my talk tonight, "helping inactive Church members to become active."

What I say, however, won't do any good unless what is said fits in with what the listener wants for himself and has a profound hunger to attain. In every instance, those who are successful love what they are doing. It is a well-known fact that the attitude, the thinking of each of us, must be right before we can do what's right.

Elder Dean L. Larsen beautifully summarized this idea in these words: "When we understand what is right and what is wrong, we are in a position to exercise our freedom in making choices. In so doing, we must stand accountable for our decisions, and we cannot escape the inevitable consequences of these choices. Such freedom to exercise moral agency is essential in an environment where people have the highest prospects for progress and development" (*Ensign*, May 1980, p. 76).

Fundamental principles

Jesus concerned himself primarily with the teaching of fundamental principles, and these principles had to do with the spiritual and mental condition of the individual. For the Savior knew that if one's mental state is right, most