

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD MEETING

THIRD SESSION

The general priesthood meeting convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 5, 1985.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus directed by Donald Ripplinger with Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Hinckley opened this session with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we greet you in this tremendous meeting of the priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Spencer W. Kimball is observing these proceedings on closed-circuit television in his apartment, as is President Marion G. Romney. They send their love and blessing.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit transmission to members of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall here on Temple Square and in well over seven-hundred locations in many countries around the world. They are being put on the screen in the Marriott Center on the BYU campus and to stake centers across the United States and Canada.

We extend our love and blessings to all who are participating in this great gathering.

Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Spencer H. Osborn are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Gene R. Cook and Russell C. Taylor preside at the BYU Marriott Center.

The singing for this priesthood session will be given by the combined Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth men under the direction of Donald Ripplinger with Robert Cundick at the organ.

We shall begin this service with the choir singing "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered." Following the singing, Elder Adney Y. Komatsu of the First Quorum of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The men's choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

Elder Adney Y. Komatsu offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth." Following their singing, President Ezra Taft Benson will speak to us.

The men's choir sang "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

President Ezra Taft Benson spoke without further announcement.

President Ezra Taft Benson

I speak to you tonight on the subject of worthy fathers, worthy sons. The Book of Mormon was meant for

us. It was written for our day. Its scriptures are to be likened unto ourselves. (See 1 Nephi 19:23.)

Worthy fathers, worthy sons

With that understanding, let us consider from the Book of Mormon the responsibility fathers have to teach their sons, and the responsibility sons have to take direction from their fathers. Since this is a general priesthood meeting, I will speak of fathers and sons. But of course, this counsel also applies to all parents and their children.

The opening lines of the Book of Mormon read: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1).

Good fathers teach their sons, and good sons listen and obey. Teaching is done by precept and example, and by word and deed. A good model is the best teacher. Therefore, a father's first responsibility is to set the proper example.

Lehi, Nephi's father, lived an exemplary life. He had a vision in which he "beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10). This tree represented the love of God. (See 1 Nephi 11:25.) Lehi partook of its fruit, which "filled [his] soul with exceeding great joy" (1 Nephi 11:12). After he had a personal testimony of its goodness, he took the next step of inviting his family to also partake.

By example, then by word

Fathers, here is a divine pattern: As the leader of the family, Lehi first taught by example. He led out in righteousness—in conversion to Christ. Then he taught by word, saying, "Believe as I believe."

What then was Nephi's responsibility after receiving this kind of direction from his father? The Book of Mormon states that Nephi, having heard all the words of his father concerning the things which he saw in vision, was desirous that he might "know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God

unto all those who diligently seek him" (1 Nephi 10:17).

Nephi had listened to his father, had believed his father, but he wanted to know through the same source his father knew—revelation. Worthy sons are entitled to receive from their Heavenly Father confirmation concerning the direction their mortal father gives them. It takes revelation to perceive revelation. So Nephi diligently sought the Lord and received a revelation which reaffirmed the revelation his father had given to the family.

Taught in the nurture and admonition of the Lord

What did the righteous fathers of the Book of Mormon teach their sons? They taught them many things, but the overarching message was "the great plan of the Eternal God"—the Fall, re-birth, Atonement, Resurrection, Judgment, eternal life. (See Alma 34:9.) Enos said he knew his father was a just man, "for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it" (Enos 1:1).

Those in the Book of Mormon who were taught nothing concerning the Lord but only concerning worldly knowledge became a cunning and wicked people. (See Mosiah 24:5, 7.)

Liberty and eternal life or captivity and death

All truths are not of the same value. The saving truths of salvation are of greatest worth. These truths the fathers taught plainly, frequently, and fervently. Are we fathers doing likewise?

Lehi taught his son Jacob about the sacrifice of the Messiah and the need for "a broken heart and a contrite spirit." He told his son that there is "opposition in all things" and that men are "free to choose liberty and eternal life" through the Lord or "captivity and death" through the devil, who desires

all men to "be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:7, 11, 27).

Faithful Book of Mormon fathers

Repetition is a key to learning. Our sons need to hear the truth repeated, especially because there is so much falsehood abroad. Devoted Book of Mormon fathers constantly reminded their sons of saving truths. "O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people," said Helaman. "Yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ" (Helaman 5:9). "My sons, remember, remember," Helaman continued, "that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation" (Helaman 5:12).

In the Book of Mormon, faithful fathers constantly bore their testimonies to their sons. "Remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true," King Benjamin testified to his sons (Mosiah 1:6) Alma bore witness to his son Helaman saying, "I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God" (Alma 36:26).

Great family legacies are kept alive in the Book of Mormon. Alma taught Helaman about how he had heard Helaman's grandfather prophesy. (See Alma 36:17.)

King Benjamin caused that his three sons "should be taught in all the language of his fathers" (Mosiah 1:2). They needed to understand and use the language of holy writ. If they didn't know the right words, they wouldn't know the plan. The Mulekites had no scriptures, and their language and faith became corrupted. (See Omni 1:17.)

In the Book of Mormon, loving fathers commended their sons when they deserved it. Alma complimented Shiblon, saying, "You have commenced in your youth to look to the Lord" (Alma 38:2). Mormon told his son Moroni, "I recommend thee unto God" (Moroni 9:22). Our sons

need to be encouraged in their righteous endeavors.

If their sons strayed, stalwart Book of Mormon fathers still continued to teach them. Lehi exhorted two wayward sons with "all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words" (1 Nephi 8:37). He preached to them and bade them keep the commandments of God. (See 1 Nephi 8:37-38.)

Alma reproved his son Corianton for his immoral behavior. This loving father said that it was no excuse that many others were also guilty. (See Alma 39:4.) Alma told Corianton frankly that his conduct made it so that some people would not believe Alma's words. (See Alma 39:11.) Alma then taught him the principle that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Why did righteous fathers in the Book of Mormon go to so much trouble to teach their sons the word of God? King Benjamin said it was to fulfill the commandments of God. (See Mosiah 1:4.) He further stated that were it not for their having the brass plates which contained the commandments, they would have "suffered in ignorance" (Mosiah 1:3). Could the lack of teaching the scriptures in our homes be a source of our suffering in ignorance today?

Have the commandments "always before our eyes"

As the brass plates blessed Lehi and his descendants, so our scriptures should bless us. "And now, my sons," said King Benjamin, "I would that ye should remember to search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should keep the commandments of God" (Mosiah 1:7). In other words, first read them, then heed them.

At what age do we begin teaching our sons these gospel truths? Alma taught his son Helaman while he was in his youth. (See Alma 36:3.) Our youth ought not to wait until the mission field

to get a grasp of the scriptures and a closeness to the Lord. Lehi said that his son Jacob beheld the glory of the Lord in his youth. (See 2 Nephi 2:4.) Imagine what would happen to missionary work if we sent out that kind of young men.

How often should fathers teach these truths to their sons? King Benjamin speaks of having the commandments "always before our eyes" (Mosiah 1:5).

Enos describes the beginning of a great spiritual experience that happened to him this way: "Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3). Note the phrase, "I had often heard my father speak."

Major responsibility rests with fathers

In summary, the Book of Mormon, which is the most correct book on earth, demonstrates that the major re-

sponsibility for teaching our sons the great plan of the Eternal Father—the Fall, rebirth, Atonement, Resurrection, Judgment, eternal life—rests with fathers. It should be done individually as well as in the family. It should be preached and discussed so our children will know the commandments. It should be done from their youth up—and often.

May we fathers teach our sons as the exemplary Book of Mormon fathers taught their sons. And may our sons, like Nephi, listen and obey, knowing that because of those teachings they too were born of goodly parents, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

President Ezra Taft Benson has just spoken to us.

Brother Don Lind, a space physicist and pilot who participated in the recent flight of the space shuttle *Challenger*, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Brother Don Lind

Priesthood will last forever

Brethren, I am honored to be with you this evening. In my professional life I associate with some very well-known and accomplished people, both astronauts and scientists. As an astronaut, I am a member of several scientific and governmental organizations. I have been a member of some committees that have made some rather important decisions in the space program that have involved a lot of money and many people's careers. But I can honestly tell you that I am more impressed to be a member of the priesthood of this Church than of any other organization to which I belong. The other organizations are organizations of men. It is an honor to belong to them, but they will

last only a few years. The priesthood will last forever. I am more anxious to be worthy to associate with you brethren of the priesthood than with any other group of men I have ever worked with.

Excitement of *Challenger* lift-off

Just after last April conference I was getting ready to take one of the most exciting trips that I can imagine. On April 29 our crew rode the space shuttle *Challenger* into orbit to conduct a scientific mission called Spacelab 3. This was a personal thrill for me and a very impressive ride. Most of you, I am sure, have seen a space shuttle lift-off on television. I can assure you that it's as exciting as it looks.