

tates to a position above your head, but that is the earth's problem.

Later at a fireside, Sister Wells made a comment about that situation that I think is very meaningful. In many things we do, the world thinks we are completely upside down. They think our moral values are foolish, our standards are restrictive, and our beliefs are quaint but outdated. The important thing is that we make sure that we keep ourselves right side up, aligned with the Lord, even if it makes the whole world look upside down.

Prepare for what you will become

It took me a long time, many years of preparation, to make it into orbit. I learned that important things don't come easily or quickly. I learned that persistence pays off. I also learned that you have to be prepared when the opportunity comes. I started preparing for the space program long before there was a space program. I could pass the six-day astronaut physical examination

because I had lived the Word of Wisdom all my life. When they started accepting applications for the astronaut program, I had already completed my education. I already knew how to fly jet airplanes. When they ran an FBI check on me, there was nothing in the record that would disqualify me. Now, you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, this evening you have already started to prepare for what you will someday become. I encourage you to prepare well.

Brethren, it's an honor to be with you this evening. I bear you my testimony that we are engaged in the work of the Lord. He lives; He guides His Church; these Brethren on this stand are His chosen servants. I bear you that testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Dr. Don Lind. We are in fast company tonight!

We shall now hear from Elder Rex D. Pinegar.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

Retrieving a fighter plane

Some years ago as a seaman on the USS *Bairoko*, I had an experience that taught me the importance of having a reliable lifeline. Our aircraft carrier was operating off the coast of Korea in rather choppy seas. As one of the Corsair fighter planes was attempting a landing, the ship rolled sharply, and the plane bounced off the flight deck, flipped over, and landed upside down, dangling partly on the ship and partly in the water. The pilot was rescued by a team of men linked together by a lifeline that enabled them to make their way down the wing to the plane's cockpit. It became necessary, however, to rig a large crane to retrieve the plane.

The boom, or arm, of the crane was stored in a cradle, or saddlelike

device, approximately six to eight feet out from the side of the flight deck over the water. The rather dangerous assignment to release the boom was given to me.

I put on a life jacket, and a lifeline secured to a steel cleat on the deck was placed about my waist and between my legs. Three men stood on the flight deck holding on to the line to save me should I slip from my precarious position.

With my arms and legs straddling the boom, I inched my way along over the churning waters. The men holding the lifeline kept assuring me that they would not let me fall—at least not very far.

Guarded and safe with lifeline

When I reached the cradle where the boom rested, the nut and key bolt securing it appeared to be somewhat rusted from months at sea. It appeared that a great deal of force would be needed to jar it free. This would be no small trick while I was sitting astride the slick, round boom. The lifeline team readied themselves, knowing that the push with my rigger's spike might throw me off balance and cause me to fall.

With the spike in place, I leaned forward, making a quick, heavy thrust, expecting the nut to resist my effort. Unexpectedly, the nut spun free, and the force of the thrust sent me quickly off the boom. Surprisingly, however, rather than tumbling down into the water, I spun completely around and stopped atop the boom in an upright position. By grasping the steel cradle, I was able to steady myself. The men holding the lifeline had stood firmly in place, carefully managing the line, making my situation as guarded and safe as possible.

Soon the boom was rigged, the plane lifted aboard, and the crew returned to their regular duties.

Lifeline to eternal life

Several days later we arrived in port in Japan. Waiting to welcome me there was a letter from my mother. After words of greeting and family news, Mother had written: "We try not to worry too much about you, Rex. We pray for you every day."

My recent harrowing experience at sea had made me grateful for the strength and support of a lifeline in the hands of strong and reliable men. My mother's letter reminded me of the lifeline of the greatest security and trust, the gospel of Jesus Christ. That lifeline is secured in the hands of God. If I would hold to it and live by it, it would hold me secure to eternal life.

The gospel lifeline

A few weeks ago I attended the baptism of a man I have known for many years. It was a joyful occasion. Surrounded by his wife of forty-seven years and his children and grandchildren and other loved ones, this good man entered the baptismal covenant. He became a member of the Church he has long sustained and supported.

From the time he brought his Mormon bride to make a home in his beloved Southland, he had respected her beliefs and her desire to teach them to their children. Because there wasn't a branch of the Church in their small city, their home became the first meeting place for the few Church members his wife could locate and invite to worship with her. Their home was always open to the missionaries, where a good meal and a place to sleep could be counted on. (His wife recalls as many as fourteen missionaries sleeping wall-to-wall in their small home on one particular night.)

As his faithful wife and children labored with the missionaries to build up the Church and the membership outgrew the walls of their home, he gave financial support for the branch, the ward, and finally the stake center as they came to be built.

During these many years, the gospel has been a lifeline that has enabled this woman to maintain her hope and trust in the Lord. It has been the strength that has bound their family together.

However, the full blessings which the Lord has to offer were unattainable by this family until this husband and father became worthy and willing to enter the covenant of baptism and receive the priesthood of God. Now this family can look forward to the exalting temple ordinances and the lifeline to eternal life which they could not provide for themselves.

A great and magnificent responsibility

The *World Book Dictionary* defines *lifeline* as "anything that maintains or helps to maintain something that cannot exist by itself."

A lifeline must be anchored to an immovable object which can withstand the pressure and strain of opposing forces and remain firmly in place.

The priesthood anchors the gospel lifeline to Heavenly Father just as every effective lifeline is anchored to a sure place. "Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved" (D&C 84:40).

As bearers of this priesthood, brethren, we have a great and magnificent responsibility.

The fulness of God's blessings and promises in the lives of our wives and children is dependent upon our worthiness and righteous leadership.

President N. Eldon Tanner, in addressing a priesthood assembly, said:

"You cannot realize and appreciate the influence the priesthood in this church could have on the whole world if every man would magnify his priesthood. Brethren, the priesthood, if magnified, is a stabilizing influence and strength. It should be. Every wife and mother has a perfect right and responsibility to look to her husband who holds the priesthood for guidance, for strength, and for direction. And he has the responsibility of magnifying his priesthood so he might be able to give this direction, this security, this strength that is needed in the home" (*Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973], p. 177).

Factors determining young man's future

Some recent studies done for the Church's Priesthood Executive Council sought to determine what factors in a young man's background in the

Church might predict his future course. (See *Ensign*, Dec. 1984, pp. 66-68.)

We have learned that there are two factors which exert the greatest influence on whether young men desire to be morally clean, serve a mission, and marry in the temple. These are (1) religious activity in the home (such as family prayer, family home evening, family scripture study) and (2) agreement with parents on values and on goals for the future. These two influences were found to have a greater impact than all other factors combined in creating these essential desires.

These findings affirm the importance of a father, as patriarch to his family and its chief priesthood officer, setting a righteous example by making the gospel lifeline operative and effective in his own life and then extending it to his family. Just as Lehi in the Book of Mormon saw in a vision the significance of the fruit of the gospel of Jesus Christ and then invited his family to partake, so should fathers in the Church today partake of the fruit of the gospel and hold out this lifeline to their wives and children. And, just as Nephi was obedient to his father and came forward faithfully and partook of the gospel's fruit and received its blessings, so should every son today grasp firmly the iron rod, the lifeline of the gospel spoken of by Nephi, and, like Nephi, follow his father's and his priesthood leaders' righteous examples.

Young men's responsibility to young women

President Tanner told the young men of the priesthood: "Boys, we have a responsibility to our sisters." He said that young women should be able to look to one who holds the priesthood, whether he is twelve years of age or older, and that "she has a right to expect in him a living example of what the priesthood should be, and to look to him for strength and counsel and direction and to feel safe with him" (*Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God*, p. 177).

He said every sweetheart should be able to feel a bearer of the priesthood would do anything, "even to the giving of his life, to protect her womanhood and her virtue, and would never think of depriving her of it, if he is magnifying his priesthood; and he will not be tempted if he is thinking of the priesthood that he holds and the responsibility that he has" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 124).

Mediators and managers of the Lord's lifeline

A priesthood holder acts as a type of mediator between the people and God, representing them officially in worship and in holy ordinances. Because he represents God, he cannot take this office to himself but must be called of God. In a special sense, a bearer of this priesthood power and authority delegated by God belongs to God. He must be holy and clean before Him. He represents the Lord and acts as His agent when officiating in or performing his priestly duties. Such priesthood rights are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven and can, therefore, be handled or utilized effectively only on the basis of personal righteousness. (See D&C 121:36.)

We needn't try to chart our own course, brethren. The Lord's lifeline is already in place as a sure guide and strength. When a priesthood leader fails to follow the program of the Lord, he cuts the lifeline and denies the divine guidance of the Lord to himself and to those he is called to lead.

As stewards of this great priesthood power and authority, we share eternal responsibility with the Lord. We who hold the Lord's lifeline to His people must stand firmly in place, as did those three seamen on the *Bairoko*, and carefully and prayerfully manage the gospel lifeline so that those depending on it may be maintained in a safe place.

Extending His lifeline to others

There was another time in my short navy career when lifelines became very important to me. Our ship was in the south Sea of Japan when a typhoon struck. The sea became so turbulent that lifelines were rigged along the weather decks and in every passageway below. For three days the raging storm caused the ship to pitch and roll, making it dangerous to walk anywhere without holding to a lifeline. Even the common tasks of shipboard life became difficult to perform without a lifeline. Only a foolish or inexperienced seaman ventures topside in a storm without a lifeline. He knows that even in a calm sea a lifeline is kept within ready reach.

Priesthood bearers, let us hold firmly to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us anchor ourselves to the Lord's lifeline by accepting him as our Savior and extending His lifeline to others—our families, our friends, and those we have been called to serve. It is our eternal lifeline to support us not only in times of emergency and crisis, but to provide us with guidance and direction in meeting daily decisions and challenges.

"His lifeline pulled me through"

I shall close with words from one of my favorite poets.

The LifeLine

By Kristen Pinegar
September 30, 1985

My life was once
Without an aim,
Confused was I, with heart so cold
Til truth and light
Became my course,
For I was in the Lifeline's hold.

Now when upset
By stormy seas
Of questioning what's right and
wrong,

When comes the urge
To fall, the Lifeline
Pulls me up where I belong.

When wicked wants
Of greed and fame
Coax me to live the ways of men
The Lifeline lassos
Evil thoughts
And whips me into shape again.

When all the world
Is crashing down,
When friends and family all
desert,
Within the rubble
Comfort comes—
The Lifeline takes away my hurt.

Holding fast,
It gives me strength
And power beyond my human
being
To bless and give
To those in need
And share with them the love I'm
seeing.

Life's pathway leads
To joy unknown
When the Lifeline is my guide—
Each step I take
Brings peace of mind
While grasping to it by my side.

The much relied-on
Faithful friend

Is anchored in an unseen place—
I long to know
My Lifeline's source
And meet this Savior face to face.

Oh, when I die
And all my life
Is lain before my eyes to view,
I'll recognize
The Savior's hand
And know His lifeline pulled me
through.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Rex D. Pinegar has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Praise to the Man," following which Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

Elder Carlos E. Asay spoke without further announcement.

Elder Carlos E. Asay

The oath and covenant of the priesthood

Of all the holy agreements pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ, few, if any, would transcend in importance the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It is certainly one of the most sacred agreements, for it involves the sharing of heavenly powers and man's upward reaching toward eternal goals. None of us can afford to be ignorant of the terms of this contract. To do so might cause us to miss the mark in our performance of duty and result in the forfeiture of promised blessings.

A gospel covenant is a holy contract. "God in his good pleasure fixes the terms, which man accepts" (Bible Dictionary, LDS ed., s.v. "covenant").

The two parties to the priesthood covenant are man and God. Man covenants to do certain things or meet certain conditions; God cites promises that he will give in return.

Man's covenant

1. *Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood in Good Faith.* When a man has the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon him, he is expected to re-