

Before President Hinckley speaks, we note that the nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir Broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 Sunday morning. Those desiring to attend must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

Because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tonight, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to you young men of the Ricks College centen-

nial priesthood choir for your beautiful presentation of the music this evening. President Benson turned to President Hinckley and then to me and said, "This is a powerful choir." I said, "President, they are from Idaho." He said, "I know it!"

Following President Hinckley's closing remarks, the choir will sing "Rise Up, O Men of God." The benediction will be offered by Elder Lynn A. Sorensen of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren, this has been a great meeting. I add my congratulations to our beloved President, Ezra Taft Benson, on the recognition he has received. It is an honor well deserved, and it compliments not only him but also the entire Church.

It is a great tribute to the consistency of his life. I congratulate the Scout organizations in selecting a man whose entire life has been a shining example of the finest teachings of Scouting. He is now in his ninetieth year, and as I think of his life, I see an undeviating pattern of adherence to principle. He has kept the faith. He has lived the commandments. He has been persuasive with all of us in his urging that we do likewise.

### Reflection on Scout meetings

It has been a long time since I have been in a Scout troop meeting. I am not familiar with the present agenda for those meetings. But I do have vivid recollections of the way in which they were conducted when I was a boy. I became a Scout in 1922, nearly sixty-seven years ago. At that time there was no Cub program. A boy had to be twelve before he could enroll in Scouting. We met in our troop meeting on Tuesday evening. We were a noisy group as we assembled. Our

Scoutmaster, Charlie Robinson, would blow his whistle, and we would all fall in line. We would raise our right arm to the square and repeat together the Scout Oath: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

It was something of a ritual each Tuesday. We did not think about it very deeply, but the words of that oath became fixed in our minds. They have remained with me through all of these years.

### Pledge to magnify the priesthood

Now, this is not a Scout meeting tonight, although some wonderful things have been said about Scouting. It is a priesthood meeting. For the purposes of this meeting, I should like to suggest another pledge for every man and boy assembled in this great gathering wherever you may be: "On my honor I will do my best to magnify the priesthood of God which has been conferred upon me."

That word *magnify* is interesting. As I interpret it, it means to enlarge, to make more clear, to bring closer, and to strengthen.

### **A comparison to binoculars**

I have here a pair of binoculars. I treasure them not only for their practical value, but also for sentimental reasons. They are useful in enlarging objects at which I might look. They are also a reminder of a good and great man who magnified his priesthood. They were given to me in 1962, at the conclusion of a wonderful series of meetings with all of our missionaries then in Europe and the British Isles, by President Henry D. Moyle, who was a Counselor in the First Presidency. Whenever I use them, I think of the gift as well as the giver.

All of you, of course, are familiar with binoculars. When you put the lenses to your eyes and focus them, you magnify and in effect bring closer all within your field of vision. But if you turn them around and look through the other end, you diminish and make more distant that which you see.

So it is with our actions as holders of the priesthood. When we live up to our high and holy calling, when we show love for God through service to fellowmen, when we use our strength and talents to build faith and spread truth, we magnify our priesthood. When, on the other hand, we live lives of selfishness, when we indulge in sin, when we set our sights only on the things of the world rather than on the things of God, we diminish our priesthood.

### **Lift, strengthen, serve, and give**

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, in speaking of the call which he and his brother Joseph had received, said, "And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence" (Jacob 1:19).

To every officer, to every teacher in this Church who acts in a priesthood office, there comes the sacred responsibility of magnifying that priesthood calling. Each of us is responsible for the welfare and the growth and development of others. We do not live only unto ourselves. If

we are to magnify our callings, we cannot live only unto ourselves. As we serve with diligence, as we teach with faith and testimony, as we lift and strengthen and build convictions of righteousness in those whose lives we touch, we magnify our priesthood. To live only unto ourselves, on the other hand, to serve grudgingly, to give less than our best effort to our duty, diminishes our priesthood just as looking through the wrong lenses of binoculars reduces the image and makes more distant the object.

### **Teach the word of God**

Jacob said further, "Now, my beloved brethren, . . . according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, [I] declare unto you the word of God" (Jacob 2:2).

Every missionary has the responsibility to magnify his calling in teaching the plan of God. Every teacher has the responsibility to magnify his calling in teaching the word of God. Every officer has the responsibility to magnify his calling in teaching the order of God.

Said the Lord in this dispensation to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, "Magnify thine office" (D&C 24:3).

Further, "Attend to thy calling and thou shalt have wherewith to magnify thine office" (D&C 24:9).

In that same revelation the Lord said concerning Oliver Cowdery some interesting and remarkable things:

"In me he shall have glory, and not of himself, whether in weakness or in strength, whether in bonds or free;

"And at all times, and in all places, he shall open his mouth and declare my gospel as with the voice of a trumpet, both day and night. And I will give unto him strength such as is not known among men" (D&C 24:11-12).

### **Experiences of Oliver Cowdery**

Oliver, with Joseph Smith, received the Aaronic Priesthood under the hands of John the Baptist, and subsequently the

Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John. He magnified that priesthood as a witness to the Book of Mormon, as a Counselor to the Prophet, as one to select the Twelve Apostles and to instruct them, as a missionary in moving the Church across the frontiers of the western territories, and as a teacher and speaker whose voice rang with great and persuasive power.

But he turned and began to look through the wrong end of the lens. He found fault. He complained. His calling shrank, he diminished his priesthood, he distanced himself from those in authority in the Church.

Gone was the voice of persuasion, gone was the power of the priesthood of God which he once held and magnified. For eleven years, he walked almost alone, without friends. He walked in poverty and in sickness.

Then in the fall of 1848, he and his family made their way to Council Bluffs and found themselves again among many of the Saints who at that time were moving to the West. At a conference held in Kanesville on the 24th of October, 1848, he stood and said:

"Friends and Brethren:

"My name is Cowdery—Oliver Cowdery. In the history of the Church I stood . . . in her councils. Not because I was better than other men was I called . . . to fill the purposes of God. He called me to a high and holy calling. I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he translated it by the power and gift of God, by means of the Urim and Thummim, or as it is called by that book, 'Holy Interpreter'.

"I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands, the gold plates from which it was translated. . . . That book is true, Sidney Rigdon did not write it; Mr. Spaulding did not write it; I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. . . .

"I was present with Joseph when an Holy Angel from Heaven came down and conferred upon us . . . the Aaronic Priesthood, and said to us, at the same time,

that it should remain on earth while the earth stands. I was also present with Joseph when the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred by the Holy Angels from on high. . . .

"Brethren, for a number of years, I have been separated from you. I now desire to come back. I wish to come humble and be one in your midst. I seek no station. I only wish to be identified with you. I am out of the Church, but I wish to become a member. I wish to come in at the door: I know the door, I have not come here to seek precedence. I come humbly and throw myself upon the decision of the body, knowing as I do, that its decisions are right" (in Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962], pp. 203-4).

He was accepted. He was baptized again. He longed to gather with the Saints in the valleys of the mountains, but he died March 3, 1850, without ever realizing that dream.

His is one of the most touching, pathetic stories in the history of this great work. So long as he magnified his calling, he was magnified. When he diminished that calling, he shrank to oblivion and poverty. He came back, but he never regained his previous stature. He never regained the incomparable promise given him by the Lord that, conditioned upon his faithfulness, he should have glory and be given "strength such as is not known among men" (D&C 24:12).

### The Lord's promises

Magnificent and moving is the promise to every man and boy who magnifies his calling as a holder of the priesthood. Said the Lord concerning you, they are to be "sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God" (D&C 84:33-34).

Further, all that the Father hath shall be given unto them.

There is no greater promise than this. I have seen and known such men. I

met some such the other day when I was at the St. George Temple. I have known and watched these brethren for many years. Their hair is now white, and they do not walk with that vitality which was once their characteristic. Those of whom I speak have never had much of wealth. But they have had much of wisdom, and they have had much of faith. They are men who since the days of their youth have held the priesthood of God, have walked in its light, and have magnified their callings. They have left home at personal sacrifice to serve as missionaries and as mission presidents. They have served as bishops and presidents of stakes. Wherever they have gone, whether in their vocational or ecclesiastical callings, they have touched a candle with the flame of their own faith and brought light where before there was darkness.

In season and out of season, in sunshine and in storm, in defeat as well as in victory, they have kept their eyes at the right end of the lens, magnifying their callings and bringing closer, as it were, the sacred and eternal things of God.

### Teach true and sound doctrine

How do we do this? How do we enlarge the power of the priesthood with which we have been endowed? We do it when we teach true and sound doctrine. The Lord has said, "And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom" (D&C 88:77).

We diminish that calling, we shrink that mission when we spend our time speculating about or advocating that which is not set forth in the scripture or that which is not espoused by the prophet of the Lord. Rather, ours is the responsibility, as set forth in revelation, "to bind up the law and seal up the testimony, and to prepare the saints for the hour of judgment which is to come; That their souls may escape the wrath of God, the desolation of abomination which awaits the wicked, both in this world and in the world to come" (D&C 88:84-85).

### Serve with diligence and enthusiasm

We magnify our priesthood and enlarge our calling when we serve with diligence and enthusiasm in those responsibilities to which we are called by proper authority. I emphasize the words *diligence* and *enthusiasm*. This work has not reached its present stature through indifference on the part of those who have labored in its behalf. The Lord needs men, both young and old, who will carry the banners of His kingdom with positive strength and determined purpose.

Who's on the Lord's side? Who?  
Now is the time to show.  
We ask it fearlessly:  
Who's on the Lord's side? Who?  
("Who's on the Lord's Side?"  
*Hymns*, no. 260)

### Reach out and give strength

We magnify our calling, we enlarge the potential of our priesthood when we reach out to those in distress and give strength to those who falter. To you and to me, who have been clothed with the authority of the holy priesthood, the Lord has said, "Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

There is so much of distress in this world. There are those, so many of them, who cry out in loneliness and fear with a desperate need for listening ears and understanding hearts. There are single parents struggling to rear families. There are houses that need painting, yards that need cleaning, whose owners have neither the strength nor the means to get it done. There are strong young men among us. There are thousands of you in these congregations tonight, young men of the Atonic Priesthood, who can bless others and be blessed while giving such service.

### Walk in honesty and virtue

We magnify our calling when we walk with honesty and integrity. We

shrink it when we stoop to devious acts and selfishness, disregarding the interests and well-being of others as we spend all of our time to accumulate that which we cannot take with us from this life to the next.

We honor our priesthood and magnify its influence when we walk in virtue and fidelity. Immorality and infidelity are totally inconsistent with the priesthood of God. The boy who has the strength to say no to drugs, the youth who has the strength to say no to beer and other forms of alcohol, the young man who has the strength to say no to immorality, magnifies his calling as a deacon, or teacher, or priest. The older man who can do likewise, the husband who is absolutely true, undeviatingly so, to the companion to whom he is married; the father who never abuses a child, sexually or in any other way — these are men who magnify the priesthood to which they have been ordained with power from on high. Those who do otherwise shrink that power. They may have been ordained, but as the Lord has declared:

“When we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

“Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to

persecute the saints, and to fight against God” (D&C 121:37–38).

Strong words, those — but as true as the sunlight in the morning. I have seen such men. I have seen them fall and shrivel until today they wallow in a slough of misery and evil with hate-filled hearts.

### Work from the godly perspective

To each of us the Lord has said, “Magnify your calling.” It is not always easy. But it is always rewarding. It blesses him who holds this divine authority. On the other hand, looking through the wrong lens shrinks and shrivels our power and diminishes our contribution. In working from the opposite perspective, the true and the natural and the godly perspective, we enlarge and lift, we grow in strength and gladness, we bless the lives of others now and forever.

My brethren, I bear witness and testimony of these things. I bear testimony of this divine power which you and I hold. It comes from God our Eternal Father and is exercised in the name of His Beloved Son. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

Elder Lynn A. Sorensen offered the benediction.

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## SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 159th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 2, 1989. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

Before the session, the choir sang “Come, Rejoice” without announcement.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks: