

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "The Morning Breaks," following which Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

Elder W. Eugene Hansen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "I Feel My Savior's Love." Following the choir number, Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "I Feel My Savior's Love."

Elder David B. Haight

I thank the Lord for this wonderful opportunity to be with you here tonight, you who hold the priesthood. I pray that my words will be appropriate, clearly heard, and understood.

Talk directed to the Aaronic Priesthood

Some of you here tonight have just turned twelve years of age and are brand-new deacons. Many of you are thirteen or fourteen or sixteen or older. But I want to speak especially to you of the Aaronic Priesthood, and others of you may listen if you desire.

Some of you have just had a birthday. I just had a birthday—my eighty-fifth. You enjoyed your birthday party, and I had a wonderful time at mine. You had your *young* friends around you, and I had my *old* friends around me. There is, however, a vital difference between us—I have had seventy-plus years of experience and learning beyond yours. I have been abundantly blessed with a most challenging, exciting, and wonderfully productive life—a lifetime of witnessing a world in action.

There have been many disappointments and heartaches but *always* opportunities, new horizons, and blessings beyond measure. I've also learned some important lessons and truths—one, the Scout motto "Be prepared" is for real.

Football game in 1923

I grew up in a small country town in Idaho. Football came to our school later than most. It was 1923. We had neither equipment nor a coach. But the great day arrived when our high school principal was able to buy twelve inexpensive football outfits—but not football shoes with cleats. We used our basketball shoes. Our chemistry teacher was recruited to be our coach because he had once witnessed a *real* game.

He taught us a few simple plays and how to tackle, and then we were ready to play—or so we thought. We set off for our first game with Twin Falls, the previous year's Idaho state champions.

We dressed and went out on the field to warm up. Their school band started to play (they had more students in the band than we had in our entire high school), and then through the gates came their team. They kept coming and coming—all thirty-nine of them, fully equipped and shoes with cleats. The twelve of us, a full team of eleven plus one all-round substitute, watched in amazement.

The game was most interesting! To say it was a learning experience is rather mild. After just two plays, we had no desire to have the ball, so we kicked it and they scored. Whenever they got the ball, they would run a baffling play and score. Our goal was to get rid of the ball—it was less punishing.

In the final minutes of the game, they became a little reckless and a wild pass fell into the arms of Clifford Lee, who was playing halfback with me. He was startled, not knowing for sure what to do—that is, until he saw them thundering after him. Then he knew what to do and boy, was he fast! But he wasn't running for points; he was running for his life! Clifford made a touchdown. Six points went up on the scoreboard. The final score—106 to 6! We really didn't deserve the six points, but with our bloody shirts and socks and cuts and bruises, we took them anyway.

A learning experience? Of course! An individual or a team must be prepared. Success or achievement depends upon preparation.

Years of preparation

The Aaronic Priesthood years are critical years of preparation. The Lord knew young men would need these valuable teen years to prepare for life—precious years with meaningful, never-to-be-forgotten spiritual experiences. You will face some crucial deci-

sions, but hopefully you will take advantage of the seasoned experience and counsel of your loving parents and concerned priesthood leaders.

Committed young people

In 2 Timothy in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul is jailed in a dark, dreary dungeon awaiting execution for his belief in Jesus Christ and teaching His gospel. Pouring out his troubled soul and firm conviction, he pleads in a letter written to his dear young friend Timothy to be faithful to the truths that have been taught to him and to remember “the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). Paul had personally blessed and ordained Timothy and now urged him to be strong and not ashamed of his testimony of our Lord, come what may.

The Apostle Paul was fearless and never wavered in his testimony of Jesus. His faith and determination lifted him from being a tentmaker to become a teacher, a missionary, leader, and organizer of Christian branches. He most certainly wasn't a sissy nor weak. People of great faith know what is right and do it. They have uncompromised determination and commitment and are capable of enduring pressure or hardship. Paul knew what was right, and you know what is right. When you take courage like Paul and do what you know is right, nothing will stop your progress but yourself.

“Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is . . . words that speak boldly of your intentions; and . . . actions which speak louder than . . . words. It is . . . coming through time after time after time, year after year after year. It is what character is made of.”

Oh, how this world needs committed, determined, and courageous young

people—young men with a righteous conviction—who will help bind up its wounds and teach faith, hope, and truth! Where will these young people come from? They will come from the ranks of the young men and women of this Church—that's where.

The Lord asked, "Unto what were ye ordained?" and then answered, "To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even . . . to teach the truth" (D&C 50:13-14).

President Spencer W. Kimball stated that "you are the sons of God. You are the elect of God, and you have within your [grasp] the possibility to become a god and pass by the angels . . . to your exaltation"—possibilities which seem beyond ordinary imagination, yet the promises are divine (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 496).

Personal foundation stones

As the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple was being laid, with footings sixteen feet wide, President Brigham Young discovered the workmen were using a soft stone. The work was halted, the soft stone taken out and replaced with giant blocks of granite. He declared, "We are building this temple to stand through the millennium" (quoted in LeGrand Richards, Conference Report, Oct. 1971, p. 83; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 81).

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing," the Lord admonishes, "for ye are laying the foundation of a great work" (D&C 64:33).

You Aaronic Priesthood holders are setting your personal foundation stones in place—stones of granite, character stones that hopefully will last forever. Your foundation stones should include principles taught by the Savior of faith, prayer, obedience, honesty, truth, and accountability for your ac-

tions. And, of course, a keystone of your foundation will be the priesthood—the power and authority of God delegated to you to act in matters pertaining to salvation, with its accompanying obligations and blessings.

You are a member of a quorum of the priesthood with officers of your peers—with duties, powers, and responsibilities. You are learning how Church members reach out to rescue and assist those who drift away or have a sorrow or a hurt. You are beginning to develop a sensitivity for Christlike service to others that brings joy to one's soul.

God our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ determined—just imagine!—that Joseph Smith was old enough at fourteen to begin his instruction that would bring about the mighty work of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Joseph saw the living God! He saw the living Christ! He was trusted with a heavenly task, and he completed it. You, too, are old enough to be trusted with ever-increasing tasks.

Choose to do right

You young Aaronic Priesthood men are old enough to know right from wrong, to know about Satan and his evil influence. *Satan* is a Hebrew name for the devil. It means adversary—one who wages open war with the truth and those who obey truthful principles. Satan chose the evil course from the beginning. His greatest aim, as taught by Moses and Enoch, is to get men to worship him (see Moses 1:12; 6:49). He has had great success. As the professed god of this world, Satan has the adoration and worship of those who live after the manner of the world. All forms of wickedness and evil and rebellion against God's holy purposes are of the devil. However, we are tested and challenged and must work out our salvation

in the presence of evil. Nephi taught, "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). We have our agency to choose right from wrong, good from evil. But just because evil exists does *not* mean that we must partake of it. You cannot do wrong and *feel* right.

Members of our Church know that tobacco and beer and alcohol, in all of their forms, have been condemned by the medical and scientific world as well as by God for the use of man. Civil laws of control are generally weak and difficult to enforce. With our inspired understanding, our most effective control over these poisonous products comes from ourselves.

Even though San Francisco 49ers quarterback Steve Young was the only Mormon in his high school in Connecticut, he reported that there was no drinking with his group of friends, despite intense pressure from classmates (see *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1991, p. D3).

You are old enough to know the serious consequences and chain of events that leads from the drinking of beer to hard liquor—leading to the loss of mental control and often to automobile accidents, loss of respect, and sexual immorality.

Some young women have stated to the news media that they are pressured by young men into sexual involvement, even threatened with unpopularity if they don't cooperate. They surely couldn't be referring to you, could they?

You young men are the protectors of your sisters and of the girls with whom you associate. Your duty to them and to yourself is to be morally clean and sexually pure before the Lord. Movies and television scenes often imply moral cleanliness is old-fashioned and not in tune with this modern world, but commandments cut into the stone tablets by the finger of God have

not changed. The Lord declared, "Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery," and later added, "nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6). The commandments are clear and understandable and uncompromising.

Lucifer is smart and cunning and understands weaknesses, so he can destroy. Emotions and passions are God-given but controllable.

Good people believe in you

My father died when I was only nine. As I was growing up, I would often think, "What would my father think of me?" or "How could I ever disappoint my mother?" She taught me and believed in me. I was no longer a little child but an emerging man, so I needed to act accordingly.

And so it is with you. Good people believe in you. We believe in you, your parents and brothers and sisters believe in you, and God expects the best from you. You must believe in yourself.

Don't give in when the going is rough, for you are laying the foundation of a great work, and that great work is your life, the fulfillment of your dreams. Never underestimate what you can become or how your talents may eventually be used.

Don't let others set your standards

I don't ever remember a time in my young life when I had to go through the trial of breaking in a brand-new pair of shoes. They were already broken-in by the time I got them as hand-me-downs.

We hear that some young men not only request a pair of new shoes for school, but another for sports, and another for church. But not just any athletic shoe will do. They must have a special designer label or be a special advertised brand. Your jeans have to be 501s or Guess or Calvin Klein. Have

you fallen into a trap of peer pressure that requires a certain look for you to be included in the “in” crowd, whether or not your parents can afford such demands?

Do others set *your* standards—what you will wear and what you will do and not do? Believing young men and women with standards and values make these decisions for themselves and let others follow. Why aren’t we, as Latter-day Saints with our high ideals, the examples, the peer leaders setting the standards and criteria that others follow?

The brand of clothes and the shoes you wear and the gadgetry, probably not affordable by your parents, have absolutely no bearing on what you will eventually become. Our actions, our personal behavior, and our attitude determine our character and future.

The world needs someone to look up to—like you. A national leader remarked, “There comes a time when we must take a stand—when we draw a line in the dust and say, ‘Beyond this line, we do not go.’”

Govern yourselves by correct principles

Your preparation should include your personal conversion to the gospel truths of this work—knowing who the Savior is and who you are and why He loved you enough to make the atoning sacrifice for you.

Sounds difficult? I promise you that you can know, but only if you desire, with humble prayer and careful study of the scriptures. The Lord taught, “Search the scriptures . . . which testify of me,” and “ponder upon the things which I have said” (John 5:39; 3 Nephi 17:3).

Your continuing preparation is to be worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, keeping yourself clean and

honorable and praying for strength and courage to withstand the evil temptations that surely come to every young man. If a mistake is made, discuss it with your bishop immediately. Do not let mistakes get an upper hold on you. Change bad behavior to good—and *do it now*. This is called repentance.

I hope you have already made a commitment to yourself and to your Heavenly Father that you will serve a full-time mission. The Lord needs your service, and you need the unmeasured blessings.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in answer to a query about this remarkable organization, said, “I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves” (quoted by John Taylor, in *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, p. 339). I promise you, young priesthood holders, that if you will follow that counsel to govern yourselves by correct principles—principles you learn at home, through the scriptures, modern-day prophets, and the Holy Ghost—your decisions will be made with confidence and ease. And though fierce winds may be whipping the trees, your roots will be deeply entrenched in the ground.

I am a living witness of our Eternal Heavenly Father’s love and mercy. He lives as does His Son, our Savior. This is His holy work, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder David B. Haight, aspiring winner of the Heisman trophy, but who has given us a great talk as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuenchwander, who was sustained at April conference as a member of the Seventy.