

## Elder Charles Didier

### Remembering covenants

As members and leaders of this church, we are often depicted as always going to or coming from meetings. This is generally true, but we need to remember why we do so. The Lord, by revelation, reminds us that when we are assembled, as we are here tonight, we are to be instructed and edified that we may know how to act upon his law and commandments (see D&C 43:8–9). How important is it to remember these instructions?

To remember is to keep in mind, to store in memory for later attention or consideration. I remember something so I can use it later for a certain purpose or result. For students like you young men, it means that you memorize facts or information to pass an exam, resulting in good grades and happiness. You may also have learned—perhaps by sad experience—that to forget is to cease to remember, resulting in poor grades and unhappiness. There is always a relationship between remembering, doing, and happiness or forgetting, not doing, and unhappiness.

The process is the same, of course, with spiritual matters. I remember the gospel and the covenants, and I act or participate. I commit and receive the blessings associated with the covenants or commandments. If I forget my faith and my covenants and do not commit and work for my salvation, I fail to receive the promised blessings.

Reflecting on this spiritual teaching pattern in my life, I would like to share with you some of my memories as a convert to the Church. This might help some of you—young or older—learn how to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9) under any circumstances.

### Baptismal covenant

It all started on the day of my baptism. I was twenty-two years old and a college student. I was part of a small group that assembled at a swimming pool in Brussels, Belgium. We didn’t have a chapel at that time. There was no baptismal font, no bishop—just two missionaries and a few branch members to support us. I had no family members with me. It was a first step in the known and the unknown. The known was a sure testimony of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; of Joseph Smith, a prophet; of the Book of Mormon; and of the Church, the only true one. The unknown was yet to be discovered and experienced. It started to be unveiled by receiving the priesthood after baptism.

### Priesthood covenants

According to the procedures followed at that time, a convert almost had to stand at the bar of judgment to receive the priesthood. Three months passed before I was interviewed and ordained a deacon. Then on that Sunday morning I stood in front of the sacrament table to distribute the emblems of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. I still remember the surroundings, which were quite different from the ornate decorations of the church where I had previously worshiped. The dining room of a home had been transformed into a meeting hall for sacrament meetings that were attended by a few members. It was my first experience to magnify my priesthood calling. Nine months later I was ordained a teacher and learned how to teach and to watch over the few members of the branch during their contentions and ups and downs.

These were also interesting days, when attending priesthood meeting

meant sitting in a circle with two missionaries and two other brothers, and reading from one mimeographed sheet of paper that was the lesson. There was no priesthood manual, and only twenty sections of the Doctrine and Covenants had been translated into French. There was no Pearl of Great Price, but most importantly we did have the complete Book of Mormon. We passed this great book from hand to hand and learned about the covenants and teachings of the Lord and his doctrine. Precept upon precept, stone upon stone, I was building my spiritual memory bank and enjoying spiritual happiness.

Another four months passed, and I was ordained a priest. Now I stood on the other side of the sacrament table. The decor was the same, but I felt different. It impressed me that now I was blessing the emblems of the Atonement and memorizing "that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, . . . and always remember him and keep his commandments . . . that they may always have his Spirit to be with them" (D&C 20:77). It was an unforgettable experience, and I still visualize it today when I bless the sacrament as a General Authority.

Two years passed after my baptism, and the day arrived for me to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and to be ordained an elder. The mission president once again laid his hands upon my head. The authority and power to act in the name of the Lord were given. It was received by mutual agreement by an oath and covenant. The oath represented the assurance that the promises of the agreement would be kept by both participants; the covenant, that the conditions of the agreement would be kept.

As I recall that priesthood preparation in the service of the Lord, I can see how remembering my covenants helped me to honor and magnify my priesthood calling, to keep the commandments, and to bring spiritual happiness into my life

in preparation for eternal life. During those trial years, many of my young friends in the Church forgot their covenants and one by one returned to the world. The world always stands between man and God, representing two alternatives but only one true choice.

### **Covenant of eternal marriage**

How can we be strengthened in making the choice to serve the Lord? By simply focusing on the doctrine of Jesus Christ that will ensure the salvation of those who remember it, accept it, and act upon it. How did the process work for me?

As a young man I considered and learned the doctrine of eternal marriage and family. This was of great interest to me and a determining factor in my conversion. I had witnessed the breakup of my parents' marriage; I had seen sorrow caused by death without spiritual knowledge and friends marrying without temple ordinances. I wanted to avoid these tragedies.

What is this doctrine? In the Bible it states that Adam was created, but he was alone. We read, "But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:20). Thus the Lord created woman—not another man—and commanded that they should be united in the sacred bonds of marriage. The first divine, righteous, ordained union between a man and a woman was sealed by these words: "A man . . . shall cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24). This is the established doctrine, and it will never change. It is repeated in modern revelation: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22).

This union is solemnized by the authority of the everlasting priesthood in a holy and sacred ordinance, the temple sealing. It is also called the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and its purpose is to bind couples together

on earth and bring them to a fulness of exaltation in the kingdom of God in the hereafter. Then Adam and Eve were also commanded to multiply and replenish the earth. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20).

The true concept of marriage and family, the unit composed of a husband, wife, and children sealed together, was instituted at the beginning by God to create eternal families. That foundation principle became my vision and my goal and also reality as my companion and I were sealed in the temple in Zollikofen, Switzerland. As a husband and father and later as a grandfather, I was and still am responsible for the development, temporal support, protection, and salvation of my family.

### **The Church provides the framework**

Another determining factor in my conversion was the Church as a divine institution led by the authority of the priesthood. It provided the framework that I needed for support as a member of that covenant group. I could not save my family by myself.

Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote: "The Church, the community of persons with the same intelligent faith and desire and practice, is the organized agency through which God deals with His children and presents His will. Moreover, the authority to act for God must be vested on earth in some one organization and not independently in every man. The Church through the Priesthood holds this authority for the use of man" (*Priesthood and Church Government* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 180).

The Church provides a unique support for individuals and families to do things that they cannot do by themselves, such as receiving the essential ordinances of salvation. It brings temporal relief in times of hardship. It is also a laboratory outside of the home where

we can serve, learn, and practice charity, the pure love of Christ.

### **The patriarchal order**

I also found in this church that the priesthood has a patriarchal order and that God is a God of order. He is at the head, and following this pattern the priesthood is conferred upon worthy men so they can preside in their homes and families. The husband and father, a patriarch, is to preside in righteousness and exercise the power of his priesthood to bless his wife and family. The husband and wife serve as partners in governing their family, and both act in joint leadership and depend on each other. They are united in the vision of their eternal salvation, one holding the priesthood, the other honoring and enjoying the blessings of it. One is not superior or inferior to the other. Each one carries his or her respective responsibilities and acts in his or her respective role.

Much more could be said about the priesthood and its uniqueness, the divine commission given to man through which he acts in the plan of salvation. In essence, therein is the true doctrine of the Father, the irreversible correct principles to govern ourselves, and the know-how to act upon the law and commandments that we were given.

### **Remember, act, and commit**

In this age of increased individualism and selfishness, opinions now matter more than facts or doctrine; attitudes glorify personal choice above other values and principles; and language is typified by "I don't need anyone to tell me how to be saved; I don't need prophets, seers, or revelators to tell me what God expects of me; I don't need to attend church meetings, to hear talks, or to be challenged."

Today the concept of priesthood and Church authority is on trial by the world

and even by some members who think that the Latin expression *vox populi, vox Dei* can be literally interpreted in the Church as "the voice of the people is the voice of God." The commercial slogan "Have it your way" certainly does not apply in God's plan for the salvation of his children when we read that the very cause of apostasy is when "every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god" (D&C 1:16). How do you overcome the temptation to have it your own way, to satisfy your own appetites, and to follow the world's trends?

One of my simple answers tonight is to constantly remember your covenants,

to act on them, and to commit to them. This sequence, as repeatedly stated in the scriptures, is a classic, spiritual teaching pattern to prepare us for eternal life. It is centered upon Christ and his doctrine and teachings. I will remember them forever.

I testify that Jesus lives, that this is the only true church, that the priesthood of the Son of God is vested herein, and that prophets, seers, and revelators who preside over this church are appointed to preserve the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ and the authority of his priesthood for the salvation of his people. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Richard P. Lindsay

Elder Wirthlin, I was at that football game and spent ten cents to watch that great run. But I forgive you for not tackling Whizzer White.

### Gratitude for Aaronic Priesthood leaders

Along with Elder Wirthlin, I should like to speak tonight to the great army of young Aaronic Priesthood bearers and especially to those who are called in these challenging times by divine revelation to be their priesthood leaders. I have had a lifelong feeling of deep gratitude to the Aaronic Priesthood leaders who blessed my early life in ways I will never be able to repay. These good men helped fill the void in my life after my father, who had served nearly all his married life as our ward's bishop, was taken by a sudden illness when I was five years old.

Some years later in 1940 as a ward deacons quorum president, I received a letter from the Presiding Bishopric of the Church, signed by LeGrand Richards, Marvin O. Ashton, and Joseph L. Wirthlin. This letter said in part, "The Presid-

ing Bishopric of the Church extends to the Presidency of the Taylorsville Ward deacons quorum congratulations and best wishes on achieving more than 90% attendance in priesthood and sacrament meeting for the year 1939." Can you imagine, brethren, the impact of this letter on the Aaronic Priesthood bearers of our rural ward and especially the three thirteen-year-old deacons who composed the quorum presidency? From that moment on, these men of the Presiding Bishopric became my instant heroes.

### Faithful deacons quorum adviser

In more mature reflection on that event, I realize that this letter was largely the result of a faithful, conscientious ward bishopric whose second counselor, assigned to the deacons quorum, frequently sat in council with us in our weekly quorum presidency planning meeting. He was *always* present for at least a portion of our weekly quorum meeting. Our quorum adviser was the kind of humble leader I envision the Savior trying to help Peter become as