

Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "Let the truth be taught by example and precept—that to steal is evil, that to cheat is wrong, that to lie is a reproach to anyone who indulges in it."⁹

Holding and exercising the priesthood of God is a marvelous blessing. We are privileged to be part of the unprecedented unrolling of this holy work. We are seeing the remarkable progress of this Church in lands we never dreamed of. Brethren, I am confident the Lord will continue to bless us as we remain honest, faithful, and true to ourselves and to this great cause. The progress of this work is a testimony of its truthfulness, yet each of us can have our own witness through the gift of the Spirit. I have such a witness. That witness permeates the very depths of my soul. May the Lord bless us as we go forth in this holy cause, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1960), 189–90.
2. As related by Janette Hales Beckham.

3. 2 Nephi 9:41.

4. *Othello*, act 3, scene 3, lines 157–61.

5. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.

6. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.

7. "Nothing but the Truth," in Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, comps., *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1993), 91–92.

8. In Stanley E. Miller and others, comps., *Especially for Mormons*, 5 vols. (1972), 1:185–86.

9. "Four Simple Things to Help Our Families and Our Nations," *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 7.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust, for that great message.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Let Us All Press On," and President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Let Us All Press On."

President Thomas S. Monson

President Faust, I wish you would tell the clocks in the Tabernacle to be honest. They've changed 2 hours and 40 minutes during the last song! I can't believe it. Take a look, brethren.

"Be thou an example"

As I contemplate the vast audience assembled for this general priesthood meeting of the Church, I seek the help of our Heavenly Father. I approach my responsibility to speak to you with the deepest humility.

Of late I have been studying the teachings of the early Apostles, including their calls, their ministries, and their

very lives. It is a fascinating experience and brings one closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tonight may I share with you a profound plea given by the Apostle Paul to his beloved Timothy. Paul's words are applicable to each of us: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. . . . Neglect not the gift that is in thee. . . . Meditate upon these things."¹

Brethren, ours is the opportunity to learn, the privilege to obey, and the duty to serve. In our time there are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save.

Paying tithing strengthens us

For example, consider the law of tithing. The honest payment of tithing provides a person the inner strength and commitment to comply with the other commandments.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has declared: "There has been laid upon the Church a tremendous responsibility. Tithing is the source of income for the Church to carry forward its mandated activities. The need is always greater than the availability. God help us to be faithful in observing this great principle which comes from him with his marvelous promise."²

From Malachi we read: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . . Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."³

All of us can afford to pay tithing. In reality, none of us can afford not to pay tithing. The Lord will strengthen our resolve. He will open a way to comply.

A family pays tithing and is blessed

May I share with you a letter I received some months ago which provides such an example? The letter begins:

"We live on the edge of a small town, and our neighbor uses our pasture for his cattle and as payment provides us with all the beef we want. Each time we get new meat, we have some of the present supply left over; and since we live in a student ward, we take meat to some students we feel might have use for some good beef.

"During the time my wife was serving in a Relief Society presidency, her secretary was a student's wife, the mother

of eight children. Her husband, Jack, had recently been called as ward clerk.

"My wife had always prayed to know which students might need our help with our excess meat. When she told me she felt we should give some meat to Jack and his family, I was very concerned that we might offend them. So was she. We both were worried because they were a very independent family.

"A few days later, my wife said she still felt we should take the meat to them, and I reluctantly agreed to go along. When we delivered the meat, my wife's hands were actually shaking, and I was very nervous. The children opened the door, and when they heard why we were there, they began dancing around. The parents were reserved but pleasant. When we drove away, my wife and I both were so relieved and happy that they had accepted our gift.

"A few months later our friend Jack got up in testimony meeting and related the following. He said that all his life he had had a hard time paying tithing. With such a large family, they used all the money he made just to get by. When he became ward clerk, he saw all the other people paying tithing and felt he needed to also. He did so for a couple of months, and all was well. Then one month he had a problem. In his job, he completed work and was paid a few months later. He could see that the family was going to be far short of money. He and his wife decided to share the problem with their children. If they paid their tithing, they would run out of food on about the 20th of the month. If they didn't pay their tithing, they could buy enough food to last until the next paycheck. Jack said he wanted to buy [the] food, but the children said they wanted to pay tithing—so Jack paid the tithing, and they all prayed.

"A few days after paying their tithing, we had shown up with our package of meat for them. With the meat, added to what they had, there was no problem

having enough food until the next paycheck.

“There are so many lessons here for me—for instance, always listen to my wife—but for me the most important is that the prayers of people are almost always answered by the actions of others.”

Counsel to returning missionaries

I recognize that there are thousands of missionaries attending this priesthood meeting tonight. I wish to share a word or two especially with you. During the time I served as a mission president, and then in thousands of missionary interviews as a member of the Twelve, I said to the missionaries I interviewed, “When you return to your home, I ask that you make three commitments.” Eagerly, without knowing what the commitments were, they would nod their approval. I then shared with them this counsel:

1. Prepare well for your vocation, profession, or trade, and be the very best you can be at what you choose to do.

2. Quoting Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Marry the right person [at the right time], in the right place, [and] by the right authority.”⁴ Thus far, their responses were spontaneous and enthusiastic. Then I would counsel:

3. Always be active in the Church. Some of the missionaries would look a little quizzical before responding, and I would say, “Let me put the matter another way. Three words provide the formula: *Pay your tithing.*” Each would affirm determination to do so. I truly believe that the payment of an honest tithing will go a long way to ensure continued activity in the Church.

Giving fast offerings blesses all

I could say much more concerning tithing, but tonight I would also wish to address the other part of Malachi’s message—namely, offerings.

The concept of fast offerings appears as early as the time of Isaiah when,

speaking of the true fast, he encouraged people to fast and “to deal thy bread to the hungry, and . . . bring the poor that are cast out to thy house.”⁵ The Prophet Joseph instituted the practice of collecting fast offerings for the poor in Kirtland, Ohio. And later at Nauvoo, Illinois, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sent a general letter to the Church defining “the principle of fasts,” stating: “Let this be an ensample to all saints, and there will never be any lack for bread: When the poor are starving, let those who have, fast one day and give what they otherwise would have eaten to the bishops for the poor, and every one will abound for a long time; and this is one great and important principle of fasts approved of the Lord. And so long as the saints will all live to this principle with glad hearts and cheerful countenances they will always have an abundance.”⁶

The prophets of our day and time have been equally specific. Harold B. Lee counseled: “When you think about it, there is so much promised in the gospel for so little required on our part. For example, the ordinance of baptism is given us for the remission of sins, for entrance into the kingdom—a new birth; the gift of the Holy Ghost gives us the right to companionship with one of the Godhead; administration to the sick qualifies the individual with faith for a special blessing; by paying our tithing, the windows of heaven may be opened unto us; by fasting and by paying our fast offerings, we are told that then we might call on the Lord and He will hear our cry and our call.”⁷

President Lee’s successor in the Presidency of the Church, President Spencer W. Kimball, said: “We wish to remind all the Saints of the blessings that come from observing the regular fast and contributing as generous a fast offering as we can, and as we are in a position to give. Wherever we can, we should give many times the value of the meals from which we abstained.”⁸

The honor of collecting fast offerings

President Kimball added: "Collecting fast offerings is an important [duty]. I thought it was a great honor to be a deacon. My father was always considerate . . . and . . . permitted me to take the buggy and horse to gather fast offerings. My responsibility included that part of the town in which I lived, but it was quite a long walk to the homes, and a sack of flour or a bottle of fruit or vegetables or bread became quite heavy as it accumulated. So the buggy was very comfortable and functional. We have changed to cash in later days, but it was commodities in my day. It was a very great honor to do this service for my Heavenly Father: and though times have changed, when money is given generally instead of commodities, it is still a great honor to perform this service."⁹

I imagine you young deacons today also wouldn't mind taking a horse and buggy to gather fast offerings!

I remember when, as a young deacon, I would cover a portion of the ward on fast Sunday morning, giving the small envelope to each family, waiting while a contribution was placed in it, and then returning it to the bishop. On one such occasion, an elderly member, Brother Wright, welcomed me at the door and, with aged hands, fumbled at the tie of the envelope and placed within it a quarter. His eyes fairly twinkled as he made his contribution. He told me of a time years before when the Relief Society president, Sister Balmforth, with food collected from those who had given, carried to his home in a small red wagon food for his cupboard and provided gratitude for his soul. He described her as "an angel sent from heaven." I have not forgotten Eddie Wright.

Taking deacons to Welfare Square

Deacons and others of the Aaronic Priesthood who perform today this sa-

cred service, please know this to be a sacred duty. I recall that as a bishop, one morning the boys in the ward over which I presided had assembled—sleepy-eyed, a bit disheveled, and mildly complaining about arising so early to fulfill their assignment. Not a word of reproof was spoken, but during the following week we escorted the boys to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City for a guided tour. They saw firsthand a lame sister operating the telephone switchboard, an older man stocking shelves, women arranging clothing to be distributed—even a blind person placing labels on cans of food. Here were individuals earning their sustenance through their contributed labors. A penetrating silence came over the boys as they witnessed how their effort each month helped to collect the sacred fast offering funds which aided the needy and provided employment for those who otherwise would be idle.

From that hallowed day forward, we no longer had to urge our deacons with regard to collecting fast offerings. On fast Sunday mornings, they were present at 7:00 A.M., dressed in their Sunday best, anxious to do their duty as holders of the Aaronic Priesthood. No longer were they simply distributing and collecting envelopes. They were helping to provide food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless—all after the way of the Lord. Their smiles were more frequent, their pace more eager, their very souls more subdued. Perhaps now they were marching to the beat of a different drummer; perhaps now they better understood the classic passage, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."¹⁰

Cleaning the poultry farm

In the vicinity where I lived and served, we operated a poultry project. Most of the time it was an efficiently operated welfare project, supplying to the

storehouse thousands of dozens of fresh eggs and hundreds of pounds of dressed poultry. On a few occasions, however, the experience of being volunteer city farmers provided not only blisters on the hands, but frustration of heart and mind. For instance, I shall ever remember the time we gathered together the teenage Aaronic Priesthood young men to really give the poultry project a spring cleaning. Our enthusiastic and energetic throng gathered at the project and in a speedy fashion uprooted, gathered, and burned large quantities of weeds and debris. By the light of the glowing bonfires, we ate hot dogs and congratulated ourselves on a job well done. The project was now neat and tidy. However, there was just one disastrous problem. The noise and the fires had so disturbed the fragile and temperamental population of several thousand laying hens that most of them went into a sudden molt and ceased laying. Thereafter we tolerated a few weeds, that we might produce more eggs.

Blessings of providing for those in need

No member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who has canned peas, topped beets, hauled hay, or shoveled coal in such a cause ever forgets or regrets the experience of helping provide for those in need. Devoted men and women help to operate this vast and inspired welfare program. In reality, the plan would never succeed on effort alone, for this program operates through faith after the way of the Lord.

Brethren, you and your families are to be commended for the manner in which you also contribute generously to the humanitarian efforts of the Church throughout the world. We provide essential help to the needy in times of natural disasters, starvation, sickness, and events that can strike anywhere. Emergency food supplies, clothing, shelter, and medical equipment bring succor to the suf-

fering and peace to the recipient and to the giver—even the peace promised of the Lord. Projects provided by your generosity bring health and happiness through the drilling of wells to provide uncontaminated water to those who have never had such. Children walk who once would have been crippled by polio, thanks to your contributions which provided the vaccine to prevent such tragedies.

Do more to bless those in need

Should you be in Salt Lake City, visit the Sort Center, where millions of pounds of contributed clothing are received, sorted, packed, and shipped to the needy throughout the world as well as to pockets of poverty situated closer to home. One is reminded of the statement made by the Prophet Joseph: "A man filled with the love of God is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."¹¹

Most of you are home teachers. You are the eyes and ears of the bishops in seeking out the poor and the afflicted. While doing their duty, vigilant home teachers have observed unemployed fathers anxious to obtain work; distraught mothers seeing their tiny broods suffer; children crying from hunger, inadequately clothed to protect them from the cold of winter. In one instance, all of the family members were sleeping on the floor because they had no beds. Without delay, needed help was provided.

Remember the counsel from King Benjamin described in Mosiah: "Ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish."¹²

Fortunately and commendably, the Church is doing more than it has ever done to relieve suffering, to satisfy hun-

ger, to prevent and cure illness, and to bless those in need. There is more to do.

Brethren, my prayer is that we be "example[s] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."¹³ Then shall we be recipients of the Lord's promise:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory."¹⁴

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Timothy 4:12, 14, 15.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 61; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 41.
3. Malachi 3:8, 10.
4. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 118.
5. Isaiah 58:7.
6. *History of the Church*, 7:413.
7. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 366-67.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 80.

9. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 146.
10. Matthew 25:40.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 174.
12. Mosiah 4:16.
13. 1 Timothy 4:12.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5-6.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. I hope they can get the clocks going by then. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express our very deep gratitude to the Provo MTC men's choir for the inspiring music this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Rise Up, O Men of God." The benediction will be offered by Elder Richard B. Wirthlin of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Travels to meet with the Saints

My dear brethren, we have received good counsel this evening.

Since we met last April, I have been much out among our people. I have determined that for so long as I have the strength to do so, I will get out and meet with the Saints I love, both the youth and the adults. I have in recent months participated in many meetings with more than 300,000 Latter-day Saints in 17 different nations. We have traveled from sea to sea across the United States, and extensively in Asia and in Europe. I do not enjoy travel. I weary of it. Jet lag, for me, is a very real thing. But I do enjoy looking into the faces and shaking the hands of faithful Latter-day Saints,

and I thank those who have made this possible.

As I have gone about the world, I have had opportunity for interviews with representatives of the media. This is always a worrisome undertaking because one never knows what will be asked. These reporters are men and women of great capacity, who know how to ask questions that come at you like a javelin. It is not exactly an enjoyable experience, but it represents an opportunity to tell the world something of our story. As Paul said to Festus and Agrippa, "This thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

We have something that this world needs to hear about, and these interviews afford an opportunity to give voice to that.