

We can perform mighty miracles

One of my Book of Mormon heroes, Ammon, the great son of Mosiah, explains how much two people can accomplish when one of them is the Lord: "Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever" (Alma 26:12).

To you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and to you brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, I witness that we *can* perform "many mighty miracles," as testified by Ammon and by Dan Jones! They took the Lord as their guide, listened to and obeyed the Holy Spirit, and learned that they could indeed perform mighty miracles, which thing they never had supposed.

Our own challenges in this day will be great. Our needs will be significant.

Our loyalty to great gospel truths must be no less valiant than that of those young men over 140 years ago.

It is my prayer, brethren, that each of us will make the Lord—and His revealed word through His servants, the prophets—the guiding influence in our lives. Each of us has a miracle to perform, a journey to complete, and a marvelous mission to fulfill.

May Heavenly Father bless you to know that you are one of His chosen sons in a blessed and royal generation, and that He has mighty miracles for *you* to perform. With His strength and the guidance of the Spirit, you too can do all things! To which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Jack H Goaslind of the Seventy. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

Priesthood is the greatest power

My dear brethren, I prayerfully seek your faith as I undertake the overwhelming responsibility of addressing this great body of priesthood holders. May I express my profound appreciation for your loyalty, faithfulness, and devotion. The work of God our Father goes forward as never before because of your commitment and devotion to this holy work.

Brethren, we must never let the great powers of the holy priesthood of God lie dormant in us. We are bound together in the greatest cause and the most sacred work in all the world. To exercise these great powers, we must be clean in thought and action. We must do nothing

which would impair the full exercise of this transcendent power.

Priesthood is the greatest power on earth. Worlds were created by and through the priesthood. To safeguard this sacred power, all priesthood holders act under the direction of those who hold the keys of the priesthood. These keys bring order into our lives and into the organization of the Church. For us, priesthood power is the power and authority delegated by God to act in His name for the salvation of His children. Caring for others is the very essence of priesthood responsibility. It is the power to bless, to heal, and to administer the saving ordinances of the gospel. Righteous priesthood authority is most

needed within the walls of our own homes. It must be exercised in great love. This is true of all priesthood holders—deacon, teacher, priest, elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle.

Serving as a junior home teaching companion

I first learned the principle of priesthood caring from my own father and grandfather, but I have also seen it manifested by thousands of worthy men. I learned great lessons of priesthood caring as a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. I was assigned to serve as a junior home teaching companion to a great Scandinavian immigrant named Algot Johnson from Malmo, Sweden. I learned to admire everything about him, including his endearing Swedish accent. He taught me the true meaning of the Lord's instruction to the teachers:

"The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."¹

Brother Johnson had paid a great price to leave his beloved Sweden and come to the United States. He was very dedicated. Despite the difference in our ages, we became lifelong friends. When he became our ward Sunday School superintendent, he asked for me to be his counselor. I was only 17 years of age. He was a successful contractor, and when I returned home from World War II, he built my first home. When I graduated from law school, I did legal work for him, and when I billed him for my legal services, he paid me more than I asked. That did not happen very often. I cite this experience to emphasize the importance of giving every Aaronic Priesthood

holder the opportunity to serve as a junior companion to faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

Lessons learned from visiting a shut-in

The duty of home teachers cannot always be satisfied with a once-a-month visit. They need to be caring and willing to serve as the need arises. I know of members of one high priests group who take tools when they go home teaching. We do not expect home teachers to be able to fix everything, such as computers and other highly technical equipment. They can, however, offer their wisdom and experience in assisting their assigned families to find the needed help. Caring home teachers should make appointments in advance, if possible. Aaronic Priesthood home teaching companions can learn lifelong lessons and be greatly blessed by serving with faithful Melchizedek Priesthood senior companions. Brother Robert F. Jex shares his faith-strengthening experience as a junior home teaching companion many years ago:

"My legs felt like gelatin and there was a knot in my stomach as we approached the door. I was sure that I was going to faint as my [home teaching] companion told me that this was my door.

" . . . I was a 15-year-old home teacher climbing the stairs to the apartment of Sister Rice, a widow living in the Bountiful (Utah) First Ward. Don Gabbott, my companion, was to teach me a great lesson that night about the nurturing role of priesthood bearers to shut-ins who are cut off from the mainstream of Church activity.

"Brother Gabbott had given me a topic to present to the five families assigned us, and I was frightened. . . . I [had] prepared . . . some notes on a paper, but I was unsure of how to take the lead in the presence of a high priest.

"The response to our knocking was slow. . . . I was about to suggest that no one was home. Then the shrunken figure of a frail, aged sister, came around a corner in the hallway. She seemed uncertain of what waited her answer at the door. Her face brightened as she recognized Brother Gabbott. We were invited into her living room and asked to take a seat.

"After a short greeting, Brother Gabbott looked at me as if to say, 'Okay, Bob, it's time to give our message.' The knot in my stomach tightened as I began to speak. I cannot recall what I said—it doesn't really matter—for I was the pupil in the classroom of priesthood duty and responsibility. As I glanced up from my notes at the conclusion of my remarks, my eyes fell upon the tear-stained cheeks of that sweet, sensitive sister. She expressed her gratitude for the presence of priesthood bearers in her humble home.

"I was speechless. . . . What had I said that had been so profound? What could I do? Fortunately, Brother Gabbott came to my rescue by bearing his testimony and asking if there were any needs in the home. There were.

"Sister Rice said that she had not been feeling well and asked that she be remembered as we offered our prayer before leaving. She then turned to me and asked if I would offer that prayer. By that time, I was so overcome by the spirit of the occasion . . . [and] surprised that I was asked to pray when someone older and more experienced and trusted was present. Automatically, I consented and offered a benediction upon that home teaching visit, asking that a special blessing of health and strength be given to that faithful sister whom I barely knew but quickly came to love and respect.

"Twenty-five years have passed since my introduction to home teaching in the home of Sister Rice, and she has long since passed away. But I cannot

pass that orange-brick fourplex on Bountiful's Main Street without thinking about the experience provided by Brother Gabbott and a faithful sister who knew the appropriateness of calling upon the powers of heaven embodied in an obedient high priest and an insecure, frightened teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood."²

Counsel to bishops

I wish to say a word to our faithful and devoted bishops. I recently reread in the *Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook* the responsibilities of the bishop. These responsibilities are heavy and often quite demanding. Some duties the bishop cannot delegate, but others can and should be handled by his counselors, fathers, home teachers, and quorum leaders. Many years ago we were taught by President Harold B. Lee a fuller meaning of the direction from the Lord: "Let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling."³ He said: "It becomes the responsibility of those of us who lead to *let, to permit, to give opportunity* for every man to learn his duty. . . . Help is not helpful if we assume the prerogatives that belong to that individual."⁴ This fuller understanding also means that presiding officers of the Church should be careful not to usurp the responsibilities and duties of those they are called to direct.

Bishops, as you serve in this great calling, you may be able to influence more lives for good than at any other time in your life. While you are enjoying the mantle of a bishop and presiding high priest, you will have special spiritual endowments of wisdom, insight, and inspiration concerning the welfare of your people. As president of the Aaronic Priesthood and of the priests quorum, you have particular interest and concern for the youth, both boys and girls.

Safety in sustaining our leaders

I have discussed the duty of priesthood leaders and members to care for their families, quorums, wards, and stakes. I should like now to discuss another aspect of priesthood responsibility, which is our privilege to sustain those in authority over us. Wilford Woodruff recorded a remarkable account which illustrates the importance of this responsibility.

In the early days of the Church, President Brigham Young asked Wilford Woodruff to take his family to Boston and gather the Saints from New England and Canada and send them to Zion. With a company of 100, they arrived at Pittsburgh at sundown. Brother Woodruff recorded:

"We did not want to stay there, so I went to the first steamboat that was going to leave. I saw the captain and engaged passage for us on that steamer. I had only just done so when the spirit said to me, . . . 'Don't go aboard that steamer, nor your company.' Of course, I went and spoke to the captain, and told him [that] I had made up my mind to wait.

"Well, that ship started, and had only got five miles down the river when it took fire, and three hundred persons were burned to death or drowned."⁵

What if the Saints had not followed the counsel of Wilford Woodruff? All wisely chose to be obedient. Had they not done so, they would have perished.

In my lifetime, there have been very few occasions when I questioned the wisdom and inspiration given by key priesthood leaders. I have always tried to follow their counsel, whether I agreed with it or not. I have come to know that most of the time they were in tune with the Spirit and I was not. The safe course is to sustain our priesthood leaders and let God judge their actions.

In the early days of the Church, many fell away because they would not sustain Joseph Smith as the Lord's

anointed. In fact, the Prophet Joseph said of some of the leaders in Kirtland that "there have been but two but what have lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball."⁶ Because of their faithful loyalty, the Lord called Brigham Young to lead the Church west, and when the First Presidency was reorganized, Heber C. Kimball was called as First Counselor to Brigham Young.

I do not speak of blind obedience, but rather the obedience of faith, which supports and sustains decisions with confidence that they are inspired. I advocate being more in tune with the Spirit so we may feel a confirming witness of the truthfulness of the direction we receive from our priesthood leaders. There is great safety and peace in supporting our priesthood leaders in their decisions.

Prepare for priesthood service

The priesthood of this Church carries the responsibility to help move the work of righteousness in all the world. Priesthood service requires us to set aside our selfish interests and desires. Brethren, we need to prepare so that we are able to accept priesthood callings should they come. We should try to live providently with respect to our personal lifestyles. Living providently means living well within our means and providing for future needs and events. We should avoid the bondage of crushing, unnecessary indebtedness. We should also try to have some savings to tide us over for a rainy day. In short, we should seek to manage our affairs so that we are better able to accept the calls which might come to us now, as well as in the future.

Righteousness necessary for priesthood power

You young men need to understand that this greatest of all powers, the priesthood power, is not accessed the

way power is used in the world. It cannot be bought or sold. In the book of Acts, we learn that a man called Simon wanted to buy the priesthood power of the Apostles to lay on hands and bestow the Holy Ghost. "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."⁷ Many of you watch and admire linebackers, power forwards, and centers, as well as those who wield wealth, fame, and political and military power. Worldly power often is employed ruthlessly. However, priesthood power is invoked only through those principles of righteousness by which the priesthood is governed. The Lord has said:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. . . .

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven."⁸

We are told that "many are called, but few are chosen."⁹ One who is chosen is one who is the object of divine favor.¹⁰ Brethren, how may we be chosen? We may be chosen only when we are chosen by God. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it [to] you."¹¹ This happens only when the heart and soul are transformed, when we have striven with all our heart, might, mind, and soul to keep all of the commandments of God. It happens when we have kept "the

oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood."¹² Thus, we may "become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God."¹³

Priesthood is a marvelous blessing

President Stephen L. Richards, a former Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "I have reached the conclusion in my own mind that no man, however great his intellectual attainments, however vast and far-reaching his service may be, arrives at the full measure of his sonship and the manhood the Lord intended him to have, without the investiture of the Holy Priesthood, and with that appreciation, my brethren, I have given thanks to the Lord all my life for this marvelous blessing which has come to me—a blessing that some of my progenitors had, and a blessing which more than any other heritage I want my sons and my grandsons and my great-grandsons to enjoy."¹⁴

Brethren, may we strive to keep the oath and covenant of the priesthood and qualify for and receive all of the supernatural blessings God has for His faithful sons, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–55.
2. "My First Door," *New Era*, May 1989, 27.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:109.
4. In Regional Representatives' Seminar Addresses, 4–5 Apr. 1973, 4, 14; Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
5. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (1990), 294–95.
6. *History of the Church*, 5:412.
7. Acts 8:20.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42, 45.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 121:40.
10. See *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. [1993], "chosen," 203.

11. John 15:16.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 84:39.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:34.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1955, 88.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust. The choir and congregation will now join in

singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." Following that, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

President Thomas S. Monson

"If you build it, [they] will come"

Several years ago an unusual motion picture swept the theaters in this and in other lands. It was entitled *Field of Dreams* and was the story of a young man who revered the baseball players of his youth and, from this foundation, carved out a large section from his cornfield and located there a full-blown baseball diamond. People mocked his foolishness and ridiculed his lack of common sense. The film goes on to show the many challenges he faced in completing the project and readying the baseball diamond for view. His was not an easy task. During the period of doubt as to the future success of his dream, he was driven by the reassuring words, "If you build it, [they] will come." And come they did. Travelers by the thousands visited this unique place, which was filled with baseball's many memories.

Missionaries build bridges

Lately, I have reflected on the importance of building a bridge to the heart of a person. I think of the nearly 55,000 full-time missionaries from our faith who are assigned over much of the world with the divine commission to teach, to testify, and to baptize. Theirs is a bridge-building task, awesome to behold and somewhat overwhelming to contemplate. With

God's mandate ringing in their ears, with the Lord's instruction penetrating their hearts, they move forward in their lofty callings. They ponder the Lord's words:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."¹

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."²

Last year was the centennial of Utah statehood, and many ambassadors from other countries made a visit to our state capitol and also to the Church Administration Building. Many also toured the Missionary Training Center at Provo, Utah. They visited the classes of learning; they heard the testimonies of those going to their respective fields of labor. They marveled at the language proficiency, faith, and love exhibited by the missionaries. One ambassador stated, "I observed a sense of purpose, a commitment to prepare and to serve, and a joyful heart in each missionary."

These missionaries go forward with faith. They know their duty. They understand that they are a vital link for the persons they will meet as missionaries and in the teaching and testifying they