

of the Spirit and obeyed the counsel of the Brethren, Eph became a notable liberating force in the lives of those desperate, struggling pioneers.

Obedience brings freedom and liberty

Freedom and liberty are precious gifts that come to us when we are obedient to the laws of God and the whisperings of the Spirit. If we are to avoid destruction, which was the fate of President McKay's horse Dandy and his companion, fences or guardrails must be built, beyond which we cannot go. The fences which we must stay within are the principles of revealed truth. Obedience to them makes us truly free to reach the potential and the glory which our Heavenly Father has in store for us.

I testify to you of the importance of obedience. I also wish to testify to you, my brethren, of the prophetic mantle which rests upon President Hinckley,

which enables him to receive the inspiration and guidance from the head of this Church, the Lord and Savior, which I do in His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Rick Walton and Fern Oviatt, comp., *Stories for Mormons* (1983), 86–87.
2. See Abraham 4.
3. Conversation with E. Jake Garn, 23 Feb. 1999.
4. See Genesis 37; 39–42.
5. Hebrews 5:8.
6. Adapted from Jacob M. Braude, comp., *Braude's Treasury of Wit and Humor* (1964), 147.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 89:18.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 89:19.
9. John 7:17.
10. See Sidney Alvarus Hanks and Ephraim K. Hanks, *Scouting for the Mormons on the Great Frontier* (1948), 132–33, 135–36.

President Thomas S. Monson

Safeguarding life's foundations

I am honored tonight to be with the vast army of priesthood bearers who daily respond to calls to serve, who teach diligently as the Lord has commanded, and who labor mightily to bring a correction course to a specific challenge which the Church must meet—namely, to live in the world without being of the world.

In this day in which we live, the floodwaters of immorality, irresponsibility, and dishonesty lap at the very moorings of our individual lives. If we do not safeguard those moorings, if we do not have deeply entrenched foundations to withstand such eroding influences, we are going to experience difficulty.

One of the greatest safeguards we have in the Church is a strong, firm, committed, dedicated, and testifying Melchizedek Priesthood base.

Living and dead water

In my office I have two small earthen containers. One is filled with water I retrieved from the Dead Sea. The other contains water from the Sea of Galilee. Occasionally I will shake one of the bottles to ensure that the water has not diminished. When I follow this practice, my mind turns to these two different bodies of water. The Dead Sea is void of life. The Sea of Galilee is filled with life and with memories of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Too few young men becoming elders

There is another body of water found throughout the Church today. I speak of the pool of prospective elders in each ward and each stake. Picture in your mind a river of water gushing into the pool. Then consider a trickle of water emerging from that stagnated pool—a trickle which represents those going forward into the Melchizedek Priesthood. The pool of prospective elders is becoming larger and wider and deeper more rapidly than any of us can fully appreciate.

It is essential, even critical, that we study the Aaronic Priesthood pathway, since far too many boys falter, stumble, then fall without advancing into the quorums of the Melchizedek Priesthood, thereby eroding the active priesthood base of the Church and curtailing the activity of loving wives and precious children.

What can we as leaders do to reverse this trend? The place to begin is at the headwaters of the Aaronic Priesthood stream. There is an ancient proverb which purports to correctly determine the sanity of an individual. A person is shown a stream of water flowing into a stagnant pond. He is given a bucket and asked to commence to drain the pond. If he first takes steps to effectively dam the inflow to the pond, he is adjudged sane. If on the other hand he ignores the inflow and tries to empty the pond bucket by bucket, he is designated as insane.

The bishop, by revelation, is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood and is president of the priests quorum in his ward. He cannot delegate these God-given responsibilities. However, he can place accountability with those called as quorum advisers, men who can touch the lives of boys.

The bishop's counselors, other ward officers and teachers, and particularly the fathers and the mothers of our young men can be of immeasurable help. Also very effective can be the service rendered by Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies.

This, then, is our goal: to save every young man, thereby assuring a worthy husband for each of our young women, strong Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, and a missionary force trained and capable of accomplishing what the Lord expects.

A wise first step is to guide each deacon to a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of his ordained calling. In one ward, this lesson was effectively taught pertaining to the collection of fast offerings.

Some young men learn about tithing

On fast day the ward members were visited by deacons and teachers so that each family could make a contribution. The deacons were a bit disgruntled, having to arise earlier than usual to fulfill this assignment.

The inspiration came for the bishop to take a busload of the deacons and teachers to Welfare Square here in Salt Lake City. Here they saw needy children receiving new shoes and other items of clothing. Here they witnessed empty baskets being filled with groceries. There was no money exchanged. One brief comment was made: "Young men, this is what the money you collect on fast day provides—even food, clothing, and shelter." The Aaronic Priesthood young men smiled more, stepped higher, and served with a willing mind in the filling of their assignments.

Assign priesthood duties

A question: Is every ordained teacher given the assignment to home teach? What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A boy will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to "watch over" others.

And what of the priests? These young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue their home teaching duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Example of priests blessing sacrament

I remember as a deacon watching the priests as they would officiate at the sacrament table. One priest by the name of Barry had a lovely voice and would read the sacrament prayers with clear diction—as though he were competing in a speech contest. The other members of the ward, particularly the older sisters, would compliment him on his “golden voice.” I think he became a bit proud. Jack, another priest in the ward, was hearing impaired, which caused his speech to be unnatural in its sound. We deacons would twitter at times when Jack would bless the emblems. How we dared to do so is beyond me, for Jack had hands like a bear and could have crushed any one of us.

On one occasion Barry, with the beautiful voice, and Jack, with the awkward delivery, were assigned together at the sacrament table. The hymn was sung; the two priests broke the bread. Barry knelt to pray, and we closed our eyes. But nothing happened. Soon we deacons opened our eyes to see what was causing the delay. I shall ever remember the picture of Barry frantically searching the table for the little white card on which were printed the sacrament prayers. It was nowhere to be found. What to do? Barry’s face turned pink and then crimson as the congregation began to look in his direction.

Then Jack, with that bearlike hand, reached up and gently tugged Barry back onto the bench. He himself then knelt on the little footstool and began to pray: “O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it.”¹¹ He continued the prayer, and the bread was passed. Jack also blessed the water, and it was passed. What respect we deacons gained that day for Jack, who though handicapped in speech, had memorized

the sacred prayers! Barry, too, had a new appreciation for Jack. A lasting bond of friendship had been established.

Leaders, families are a major influence

Beyond the influence of the bishopric and the Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers is the impact of the home. Help of parents, when enlisted wisely, can frequently make the difference between success and failure. A survey we conducted recently reveals that the influence of the home is a dominant factor in determining missionary service and temple marriage.

I know in my experience of only three wards with a full complement of 48 priests. These wards were presided over by Joseph B. Wirthlin, Alfred B. Smith, and Alvin R. Dyer. Almost without exception, each young man filled a mission and married in the temple. One of the keys to their success was to call to service as Aaronic Priesthood advisers men who were models for the young men to follow. An ideal model is a returned missionary, fresh from his mission and filled with testimony, where a young Aaronic Priesthood holder can say, “That’s the man I want to follow.”

Impact goes far beyond the young man

As we dam off that inflow of Aaronic Priesthood streaming into the pool of prospective elders, we will solve more problems than we realize. We will ensure that every young man will more likely than not go on a mission and will marry in the temple. Then there will not be that disproportionate number of worthy young women with few worthy young men to select as an eternal companion. We are not talking about a boy; we’re talking about husbands, fathers, grandfathers, patriarchs to their own families. Let’s put a solid foundation beneath our Aaronic Priesthood young men.

Rescue adult converts too

Let us not overlook the adult converts to the Church who receive the Aaronic Priesthood but who are not ordained to the office of elder in a timely fashion. They then join the brethren who remain in that stagnant pool of inactivity. There are those wards and stakes which have rescued vast numbers of fine men who had felt trapped by no outlet in the pond. In traveling the Church, I kept records of those units which had caught the vision of this rescue effort. All of them had similar experiences. They learned that the rescue work is best done one-on-one and at the ward level. The bishop has to be involved, for isn't he the president of the Aaronic Priesthood as well as the presiding high priest of his ward?

Choose instructors prayerfully

Worthy and well-prepared instructors must be called to help in such a critical effort. Brethren, prayerfully analyze your situation and then call to the colors those whom the Lord has prepared to go forth to serve and to save. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."² Ponder the joy that comes to a wife and children when Daddy sees the light, mends his ways, and follows in the footsteps of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Example of an effective teacher

An example of true love and inspired teaching was found in the life of the late James Collier, who had through his personal efforts reactivated a large number of brethren in Bountiful, Utah. I was invited by Brother Collier to address those who had now been ordained elders and who, with their wives and families, had been to the Salt Lake Temple to receive those eternal covenants and blessings for which they had so earnestly strived.

At the banquet honoring this achievement, I could see and I could feel the love

that Jim had for those whom he had taught and rescued and the love they had for him. Unfortunately, Jim Collier at that time was afflicted with a terminal illness and had to persuade the doctors to allow him to leave the hospital to attend this final night of recognition.

As Jim stood at the pulpit, a large smile came over his face. With emotion he expressed his love to the group. There wasn't a dry eye to be found. Brother Collier quipped, "Everyone wants to go to the celestial kingdom, but no one wants to die to get there." Then, lowering his voice, Jim continued, "I'm prepared to go, and I will be there waiting on the other side to greet each of you, my beloved friends."

Jim returned to the hospital. His funeral service was held just a short time later.

Seek divine help

In fulfilling our responsibility to those who bear the Aaronic Priesthood, both the youth and the prospective elders, I urge that we remember that there is no need for us to walk alone. We can look up and reach out for divine help. "The recognition of [a] power higher than man . . . does not in any sense debase him. If in his faith he ascribes beneficence and high purpose to the power which is superior to himself, he envisions a higher destiny and nobler attributes for his kind and is stimulated and encouraged in the struggle of existence. . . . He must seek[,] believing, praying, and hoping that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go unrequited—that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith."³ So taught President Stephen L. Richards.

Pursue the right path

A line from the delightful play *The King and I* gives us encouragement in our labors. The King of Siam lay dying.

With him is Anna, his English tutor, whose son asks her the question, "Was he as good . . . as he could have been?" Anna answers wistfully, "I don't think any man has ever been as good . . . as he could have been—but this one [really] tried."⁵

The Prophet Joseph declared, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God."⁵

Let us walk these clearly defined paths. To help us do so we can follow the shortest sermon in the world. It can be found on a common traffic sign. It reads, "Keep Right."

"Do you work for God?"

This advice was found and followed by Joe, who had been asked to get up at six in the morning and drive a crippled child 50 miles to a hospital. He didn't want to do it, but he didn't know how to say no. A woman carried the child out to the car and set him next to the driver's seat, mumbling thanks through her tears. Joe said everything would be all right and drove off quickly.

After a mile or so, the child inquired shyly, "You're God, aren't you?"

"I'm afraid not, little fellow," replied Joe.

"I thought you must be God," said the child. "I heard Mother praying next to my bed and asking God to help me get

to the hospital, so I could get well and play with the other boys. Do you work for God?"

"Sometimes, I guess," said Joe, "but not regularly. I think I'm going to work for Him a lot more from now on."

My brethren, will you? Will I? Will we? I pray humbly, yet earnestly, that we will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 4:3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35, 38.
4. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *The King and I* (1951).
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 255-56.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust and President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency have just spoken to us.

The Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. We should be in our places at about 9:15.

Daylight saving time, we remind you, begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. Move your clocks ahead, or you will miss half the conference.

We express our gratitude to this wonderful chorus from BYU, which has sung to us. Following my remarks they will sing again "The Spirit of God," and the benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard E. Cook of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren, it is a tremendous honor and responsibility to speak to you. I pray the Lord will bless me.

Priesthood is tremendous brotherhood

What a tremendous brotherhood this is, composed of hundreds of thousands of