

have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:18).

Enduring the journey brings happiness

As our family concluded the 225-mile bicycle journey, we learned that no matter how difficult things can become on this road we call life, great happiness is waiting for those who keep the commandments and endure to the end.

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, you have a responsibility to remain firmly focused on your eternal destination. Yes, life's journeys can have many ups and downs. Yes, there will be days when you will feel the going is tough. But as you stay on the right path, the reward

at the end of life's journey is well worth the moments of adversity you experience along the way.

Again, from the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, the First Presidency writes: "May you keep your minds and bodies clean from the sins of the world so you can do the great work that lies before you. We pray that you will be worthy to carry on the responsibilities of building the kingdom of God and preparing the world for the Second Coming of the Savior" (page 3).

My young friends, please know the importance of being wise by following the counsel of our prophets, and happiness will be yours throughout life's journey.

Of this I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Spencer J. Condie

Wilford Woodruff's missions bless others

As a young man of 27, Wilford Woodruff was ordained a priest on November 5, 1834. Eight days later he began a two-year mission in the southern states.¹ One night he and his companion found lodging with a family who provided them with a bare floor for a bed, which he described as "pretty hard after walking sixty miles without anything to eat."²

The next day they walked 12 miles through the rain until they came to the house of a man who happened to be a member of the Missouri mob. Brother Woodruff said:

"The family were about to sit down to breakfast as we came in. In those days it was the custom of the Missourians to ask you to eat even though they were hostile to you; so he asked us to take breakfast, and we were very glad of the invitation. He knew we were Mormons; and as soon as we began to eat, he began to swear about the Mormons. He had a large platter of bacon and eggs, and plenty of bread

on the table, and his swearing did not hinder our eating, for the harder he swore the harder we ate, until we got our stomachs full; then we arose from the table, took our hats, and thanked him for our breakfast. The last we heard of him he was still swearing. I trust the Lord will reward him for our breakfast."³

At the end of the first year of that mission he recounted that he had "traveled three thousand two hundred and forty-eight miles, held one hundred and seventy meetings, [and] baptized forty-three persons."⁴

His first mission to the southern states was followed by two brief missions to the Fox Islands off the coast of Maine⁵ and then subsequently two missions to England.⁶ During his latter mission in England, in 1840, he acknowledged that "through the blessings of God," he had been an instrument in bringing over 1,800 souls into the Church within a period of eight months.⁷

Wilford Woodruff claimed the Book of Mormon promise that "God has pro-

vided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he cometh a great benefit to his fellow beings."⁸ My young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, I would remind you that our Father in Heaven not only wants you to be good, but to be good for something, to serve and bless the lives of others, and to become a benefit to your fellow beings.

Increase in wisdom and stature

We read in the Gospel of Luke that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."⁹ Inasmuch as our earthly quest for perfection involves becoming more like the Savior, then we also should increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

Priesthood quorum activities and Mutual activities with the young women, when carefully and prayerfully planned and discussed in the bishopric youth committee,¹⁰ will help every young man and young woman to grow in wisdom as they gain a greater appreciation for the scriptures and the words of the living prophets and as they participate in Mutual activities involving "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy."¹¹

Counseling together in the bishopric youth committee also provides valuable training for an entire generation of future leaders who learn to work effectively together in councils.

You young men will grow in stature and physical strength as you engage in folk dancing, sports, and wholesome, friendly athletic competition characterized by good sportsmanship. You will grow in favor with God as you engage in family history research, perform baptisms in the temple for deceased ancestors, become faithful home teachers, frequently clean the chapel, visit nursing homes, and help beautify your communities. As you do so, you will exemplify King Benjamin's counsel that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the ser-

vice of your God."¹² A wise youth leader will place less emphasis on fund-raising activities and a much greater emphasis upon rendering selfless service to others.

You young men will increase in favor with man and become better prepared for missions, marriage, and future employment as you learn more about various careers and develop greater self-confidence through giving speeches and participating in original one-act plays and talent shows.

Minister to others

Our youth activities should reflect our belief that "men are, that they might have joy,"¹³ and we should be willing to share that joy with others. Not long ago I met a woman from the East who is now living in the Salt Lake Valley. She is a devout member of another Christian church, and I asked her how she enjoyed living among the Latter-day Saints. She said, "My husband and I get along fine, but I worry about our teenage daughter. Each Wednesday evening about seven o'clock, several girls in our neighborhood walk right past our home headed somewhere together, and not once have they stopped to invite our 14-year-old daughter to go with them."

I said, "My dear, this is your lucky day; I am in a position to get that problem fixed." She readily gave me her daughter's name and address, and we made contact with both the stake president and the seminary principal.

Our friends and neighbors are children of a loving Father in Heaven, who desires that all of us return to Him. Can we be content when not all the members of our quorum are in attendance Sunday morning? Surely we can extend ourselves to the less active and those of other faiths and warmly invite them to our Young Men and Young Women Mutual activities, seminary, Sunday School classes, and sacrament meetings.

When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood un-

der the hands of the resurrected John the Baptist, they received “the keys of the ministering of angels,”¹⁴ and so did you when you were ordained. I pray that you wonderful young men will not only be worthy to receive ministering angels, but that you, like young Wilford Woodruff, will *become* a ministering angel in the lives of others as you exercise your faith in working “mighty miracles,” thereby becoming a “great benefit” to your fellow beings.

The Holy Ghost will protect and direct you

Satan would diminish your faith and dilute your priesthood power to work mighty miracles, but a loving Heavenly Father has provided you with providential protection—the gift of the Holy Ghost. In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon we learn that as Lehi read the scriptures, “he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.”¹⁵ Nephi later promises us that as we “feast upon the words of Christ . . . , the words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do.”¹⁶

You may be facing decisions about a mission, your future career, and, eventually, marriage. As you read the scriptures and pray for direction, you may not actually see the answer in the form of printed words on a page, but as you read you will receive distinct impressions and promptings, and, as promised, the Holy Ghost “will show unto you all things what ye should do.”¹⁷

The power of fasting and prayer

Satan would have you surrender your moral agency to various forms of addictive behavior, but a loving Heavenly Father has promised you through His prophet Isaiah that through sincere fasting, as you subdue your physical appetites, He will help you “loose the bands of wickedness” and “break every yoke.”¹⁸ Claim that promise through fasting. Our emptiness will provide more room for the fulness of the gospel. The hollowing precedes the hallowing.

Scripture study and fasting, preceded and followed by prayer, really can “change the night to day.”¹⁹ The entire life of the Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrates the power of prayer and the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise that “if thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation.”²⁰ One important revelation you will receive will be insight into how you can best touch the lives of others who have lost their way. In so doing, it is well to remember President Hinckley’s wise counsel: “The Holy Ghost is the Testifier of Truth, who can teach men things they cannot teach one another.”²¹

Use priesthood to benefit others

President Gordon B. Hinckley considers good friends to be one of the key ingredients in retaining new converts and in reclaiming the less active, and Robert Browning eloquently described how this is so:

Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause
their own.²²

Late in life, as President of the Church, Wilford Woodruff declared:

“It does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest. The Lord revealed to me, by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me.”²³

My young beloved brethren, I pray that each of us, through our faith, will use our priesthood power to work mighty miracles through sharing the gospel and serving others, thereby becoming a great

benefit to our fellow beings, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (1909), 47.
2. *Wilford Woodruff*, 50.
3. *Wilford Woodruff*, 50.
4. *Wilford Woodruff*, 58.
5. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 70–86.
6. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 99–113; 114–28; 129–46.
7. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 119.
8. Mosiah 8:18.
9. Luke 2:52.
10. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 318–19.
11. Articles of Faith 1:13.
12. Mosiah 2:17.
13. 2 Nephi 2:25.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
15. See 1 Nephi 1:8–12.
16. 2 Nephi 32:3.

17. 2 Nephi 32:5.
18. Isaiah 58:6.
19. “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, no. 140.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.
21. “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1998, 7.
22. *Paracelsus*, in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 2 vols. (1902), 1:25.
23. “Discourse by President Woodruff,” *Millennial Star*, 5 Oct. 1891, 629.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren, for your inspirational counsel.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then join in singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” Following this, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

President James E. Faust

The myth of “it can’t happen to me”

My beloved brethren of the priesthood of God, the responsibility of speaking to you tonight is overwhelming. I have prayed for inspiration and guidance, and I seek your understanding.

One of the great myths in life is when men think they are invincible. Too many think that they are men of steel, strong enough to withstand any temptation. They delude themselves into thinking, “It cannot happen to me.” Borrowing a thought from Bertrand Russell, “We are all like the turkey who wakes up [Thanksgiving] morning expecting lunch as usual. Things can go wrong at any time.”¹ Brethren, it *can* happen to any of us at any time. So much of our course in life is influenced by forces we only partly perceive.

We often see only part of the danger

President Charles W. Penrose used to tell the story of an officer on the *Titanic* who stated that there was no fear of “God, man or devil,” because the *Titanic* was built so solidly that it could readily withstand collision with other ships or contact with any other force, including icebergs.² The *Titanic* was in fact three football fields in length, 12 stories high, and built of the finest steel. On that fateful night of April 14, 1912, other ships warned of ice ahead. Yet the *Titanic* continued to increase her speed, cutting through the cold Atlantic Ocean. By the time the lookouts sighted the iceberg, it was too late. The *Titanic* could not turn out of its way in time, and the iceberg scraped along the starboard side of the ship, creating a series of punc-