

wisely and remember: not every young man needs to be called to serve away from his home; some may best serve under your direction as ward missionaries.

To current and returned missionaries

To those of you who are currently serving as full-time missionaries, we thank you for your service. Tonight is a good time for each of you to take a close look at your performance; and if you are not measuring up, your mission president will help you make the necessary changes to be an effective, dedicated servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to those of you who have already served, please remember that you were released from your missions but not from the Church. You spent two years as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. We expect you to always look and act like one of His disciples. Look the part. Act the part. Don't follow worldly trends and fashions. You are better than that. If you have slipped, then do what is necessary to regain your spiritual balance. The rules for happiness and success after your mission are pretty much the same as they were during your mission: pray hard, work hard, and be obedient. Get busy now and

find your eternal companion to enjoy life with. Serve the Lord together, and raise up the next great generation.

My brethren, I have spoken plainly tonight. I hope you can feel the love and the concern that emanates from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and other Church leaders as we ask you to prepare now to join us in taking the blessings of the restored gospel to all the people on the earth. Each one of you is precious, and we want you to be successful and secure in the battle for the souls of our Heavenly Father's children. May God bless you with the courage to be "true at all times" (Alma 53:20) and with the vision to realize who you are and what the Lord has for you to do, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren. We shall now hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following his remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." At the conclusion of the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us.

President James E. Faust

Accountability for using the priesthood

My dear brethren of the holy priesthood, I pray for your understanding as I speak to this vast audience tonight. As President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley has accomplished an insurmountable group of tasks. Yet he was once a young Aaronic Priesthood holder like many of you. You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood are going to be the future leaders of the Church. This evening I wish to address my remarks mainly to

you. You need to understand that success—both for yourself and the Church—will depend on your determination to accomplish the work of the Lord. Each of you will need to have faith and confidence to move forward.

Each man and boy listening this evening has been entrusted with the greatest power on earth—the holy priesthood of God. It is the power to act righteously in the name of the Lord to build up the kingdom of God on earth. I remind you "that the rights of the priesthood are insepara-

bly connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.”¹ Priesthood is divine agency, and the Lord will hold us accountable for our use of this great authority.

“I think I can”

I first heard the wonderful story of *The Little Engine That Could* when I was about 10 years old. As a child, I was interested in the story because the train cars were filled with toy animals, toy clowns, jackknives, puzzles, and books, as well as delicious things to eat. However, the engine that was pulling the train over the mountain broke down. The story relates that a big passenger engine came by and was asked to pull the cars over the mountain, but he wouldn’t condescend to pull the little train. Another engine came by, but he wouldn’t stoop to help the little train over the mountain because he was a freight engine. An old engine came by, but he would not help because, he said, “I am so tired. . . . I can not. I can not. I can not.”

Then a little blue engine came down the track, and she was asked to pull the cars over the mountain to the children on the other side. The little engine responded, “I’m not very big. . . . They use me only for switching in the yard. I have never been over the mountain.” But she was concerned about disappointing the children on the other side of the mountain if they didn’t get all of the goodies in the cars. So she said, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.” And she hooked herself to the little train. “Puff, puff, chug, chug, went the Little Blue Engine. ‘I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can.’” With this attitude, the little engine reached the top of the mountain and went down the other side, saying, “I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.

I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.”²

Parable of the talents

At times all of us are called upon to stretch ourselves and do more than we think we can. I’m reminded of President Theodore Roosevelt’s quip, “I am only an average man but, by George, I work harder at it than the average man.”³ We develop our talents first by thinking we can. We are all familiar with the parable of the talents. The Master gave one five talents, another two, and another one, “every man according to his several ability. . . .

“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

“And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

“But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.”

After a long time the Master asked for an accounting. The one who had received five talents reported that he had gained an additional five talents and received the commendation, “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.” He that received two talents gained two other talents and also received the promise of a greater dominion. But the one who had received the one talent returned with his single talent, saying, “Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.”⁴

In accounting for his stewardship, this slothful servant imputed to his master his own character flaws.⁵ He could have at least put the money in circulation and received interest on it instead of burying it in the ground. His talent was taken from him and given to the man who had 10 talents. Then the Lord tells us, “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he

shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."⁶

We may wonder whether it was fair to take the talent from the one who had the least and give it to the one who had the most. From the outset, however, the Lord explains that each man had ability.⁷

Some are too content, passive with talents

Some of us are too content with what we may already be doing. We stand back in the "eat, drink, and be merry" mode when opportunities for growth and development abound. We miss opportunities to build up the kingdom of God because we have the passive notion that someone else will take care of it. The Lord tells us that He will give more to those who are willing. They will be magnified in their efforts, like the little blue engine as it pulled the train up the mountain. But to those who say, "We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have."⁸

The Lord entrusts all of His servants, including every priesthood holder, with spiritual talents. The Lord, who endows us with these talents, tells us, "I believe you can. I believe you can." While we are not all equal in experience, aptitude, and strength, we have different opportunities to employ these spiritual gifts, and we will all be accountable for the use of the gifts and opportunities given to us.

Samuel Brannan's loss of his talents

Church history includes incidents of priesthood holders of great capacity. A few were brilliant but also erratic and unreliable and so lost the spiritual gifts and talents with which the Lord had so richly endowed them. I would like to tell you about one such.

Samuel Brannan led some Saints around Cape Horn on the ship *Brooklyn*. They made a brief stop in Hawaii before docking at San Francisco Bay. He became

convinced that the main body of the Saints should not settle in the Rocky Mountains but should go on to California. So he traveled east and encountered the first party of emigrants under the leadership of Brigham Young in Green River, Wyoming. He used all of his persuasive powers trying to convince Brigham Young to take advantage of the opportunities which he felt California offered. Brigham Young responded, "Let us go to California, and we cannot stay there over five years; but let us stay in the mountains, and we can raise our own potatoes, and eat them; and I calculate to stay here."⁹ Brannan stayed with the main body of the Saints for a few days, but then, because he was headstrong and self-centered, in August of 1847 he headed back to California.

Like the big engine that wouldn't condescend to pull the cars over the mountain, Sam Brannan was not focused on building up the kingdom of God. Instead he was directed toward business and making money. He became the first millionaire in California, with numerous business ventures and extensive land holdings. Because he had been the leader of that group of Saints, President Young asked him to account for the tithing that he had collected from the members of the Church in California, including those involved in the gold rush, but he did not do so. Nor did he use those funds to establish the Church or to help the members there.

For a time and a season, Brannan was very successful in establishing enterprises and acquiring land for his own benefit, but eventually he fell on hard times. His family did not stay together. When he died, he was alone, broken physically, spiritually, and financially. For 16 months no one claimed his body. Eventually it was placed in San Diego's Mount Hope Cemetery. Sam Brannan accomplished much in his life, but in the end he paid a terrible price for not honoring his priesthood stewardship and for failing to follow the prophet of God.¹⁰

Follow the prophet to develop talents

Those of us who now hold the priesthood responsibility of this Church must follow and sustain our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Like the “little engine that could,” we need to be on the right track and develop our talents. We must remember that the priesthood can only be used for righteous purposes. When used “in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.”¹¹

To stay on the right track, we must honor and sustain those who hold the presiding priesthood keys. We are reminded that many are “called, but few are chosen.”¹² When are we chosen? We are chosen by the Lord only when we have done our best to move this holy work forward through our consecrated efforts and talents. Our efforts must always be guided by the righteous principles set forth by the Lord in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“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.”¹³

Priesthood power is activated by service

The priesthood is given to bless the lives of others. President David O. McKay said: “The very essence of Priesthood is eternal. As it finds expression in life it manifests power. We can conceive of the power of Priesthood as being potentially existent as an impounded reservoir of water. Such power becomes dynamic and productive of good only when the liberated force becomes active in valleys, fields,

gardens and happy homes; so the principle of power is manifested only as it becomes active in the lives of men, turning their hearts and desires toward God, and prompting service to their fellow men.”¹⁴ If we aren’t serving others, then the priesthood really doesn’t benefit us because it is not a passive power. Brethren, be generous with the power of blessing which comes through the priesthood, especially to members of your own family. Remember that the Lord has said, “Whomsoever you bless I will bless.”¹⁵

In preparing for the time when we will account to the Lord for our own personal priesthood stewardship, where will we be? Remember that “the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there.”¹⁶

Be like the little engine that could

I hope we will not be like the big passenger engine, too proud to accept the assignments we are given. I pray that we will not be like the person in the well-known poem who said:

Father, where shall I work today?
And my love flowed warm and free.
Then He pointed out a tiny spot
And said, “Tend that for me.”
I answered quickly, “Oh no; not that!
Why, no one would ever see,
No matter how well my work was done;
Not that little place for me.”
And the word He spoke, it was not stern;
He answered me tenderly:
“Ah, little one, search that heart of thine.
Art thou working for them or for me?
Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee.”¹⁷

I also hope that we will not be like the freight engine, unwilling to go the “extra mile” in service. The Master taught us that “whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”¹⁸ Some of the most

rewarding times of our lives are those “extra mile” hours given in service when the body says it wants to relax, but our better self emerges and says, “Here am I; send me.”¹⁹

Or, like the old engine, do we say we are too tired—or too old? I remind you that President Hinckley is 92 and still going strong!

I hope we can all be like the “little engine that could.” It wasn’t very big, had been used only for switching cars, and had never been over a mountain, but it was willing. That little engine hooked on to the stranded train, chugged up to the top of the mountain, and puffed down the mountain, saying, “I thought I could.” Each of us must climb mountains that we have never climbed before.

Brethren, great is our work, and heavy are our priesthood responsibilities. I hope and pray that we can go forward with this holy work humbly, prayerfully, and unitedly under the guiding Spirit of the Lord and the direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
2. *The Little Engine That Could*, retold by Watty Piper, from Mabel C. Bragg, *The Pony Engine* (1930).

3. In Evan Esar, ed., *Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (1964), 151.
4. Matthew 25:15–25.
5. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 582.
6. Matthew 25:29.
7. See Matthew 25:15.
8. 2 Nephi 28:30.
9. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 475.
10. See John K. Carmack, “California: What Went Right and What Went Wrong,” *Nauvoo Journal*, spring 1998, 5–6, 8–9; Paul Bailey, “Sam Brannan and the Sad Years,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1951, 232–34, 282–87.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 121:34.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
14. *Pathways to Happiness* (1957), 230.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
16. 2 Nephi 9:41.
17. Meade McGuire, quoted in Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 39.
18. 3 Nephi 12:41.
19. 2 Nephi 16:8.

The choir and congregation sang
“Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

President Thomas S. Monson

Master, the tempest is raging

The singing of the men’s choir this evening has lighted memory’s fire and brought to my mind the songs I sang when I was a boy. With fervor we would render:

Put your shoulder to the wheel;
push along.
Do your duty with a heart full of song.
We all have work; let no one shirk.
Put your shoulder to the wheel.¹

We had a chorister who taught us boys how to sing. We had to sing. Sister Stella Waters would wave the baton within inches of our noses and beat time with a heavy foot that made the floor creak.

If we responded properly, Sister Waters let us choose a favorite hymn to sing. Inevitably the selection was:

Master, the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing high!