

The Price of Priesthood Power

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Are we willing to pray, fast, study, seek, worship, and serve as men of God so we can have priesthood power?

Six months ago in the October 2015 general conference, I spoke to the sisters of the Church about their divine role as women of God. Now I wish to speak to you brethren about your divine role as men of God. As I travel the world, I marvel at the strength and sheer goodness of the men and boys of this Church. There is simply no way to number the hearts you've healed and the lives you've lifted. Thank you!

In my last conference message, I related my devastating experience many years ago when, as a heart surgeon, I was not able to save the lives of two little sisters. With permission of their father, I would like to say more about that family.

Congenital heart disease afflicted three children born to Ruth and Jimmy Hatfield. Their first son, Jimmy Jr., died without a definitive diagnosis. I entered the picture when the parents sought help for their two daughters, Laural Ann and her younger sister, Gay Lynn. I was heartbroken when both girls died following their operations.¹ Understandably, Ruth and Jimmy were spiritually shattered.

Over time, I learned that they harbored lingering resentment toward me and the Church. For almost six decades, I have been haunted by this situation and have grieved for the Hatfields. I tried several times to establish contact with them, without success.

Then one night last May, I was awakened by those two little girls from the other side of the veil. Though I did not see or hear them with my physical senses, I felt their presence. Spiritually, I heard their pleadings. Their message was brief and clear: "Brother Nelson, we are not sealed to anyone! *Can you help us?*" Soon thereafter, I learned that their mother had passed away, but their father and younger brother were still alive.

Emboldened by the pleadings of Laural Ann and Gay Lynn, I tried again to

contact their father, who I learned was living with his son Shawn. This time they were willing to meet with me.

In June, I literally knelt in front of Jimmy, now 88 years old, and had a heart-to-heart talk with him. I spoke of his daughters' pleadings and told him I would be honored to perform sealing ordinances for his family. I also explained that it would take time and much effort on his and Shawn's part to be ready and worthy to enter the temple, as neither of them had ever been endowed.

The Spirit of the Lord was palpable throughout that meeting. And when Jimmy and Shawn each accepted my offer, I was overjoyed! They worked diligently with their stake president, bishop, home teachers, and ward mission leader, as well as with young missionaries and a senior missionary couple. And then, not long ago, in the Payson Utah Temple, I had the profound privilege of sealing Ruth to Jimmy and their four children to them. Wendy and I wept as we participated in that sublime experience. Many hearts were healed that day!

On reflection, I have marveled at Jimmy and Shawn and what they were willing to do. They have become heroes to me. If I could have the wish of my heart, it would be that each man and young man in this Church would demonstrate the courage, strength, and humility of this father and son. They were willing to forgive and let go of old hurts and habits. They were willing to submit to guidance from their priesthood leaders so that the Atonement of Jesus Christ could purify and magnify them. Each was willing to become a man who worthily bears the priesthood "after the holiest order of God."²

To *bear* means to support the weight of that which is held. It is a sacred trust to bear the priesthood, which is the mighty power and authority of God. Think of this: the priesthood conferred upon us is *the very same power and authority* through which God created this and numberless worlds, governs the heavens and the earth, and exalts His obedient children.³

Recently, Wendy and I were in a meeting where the organist was poised and ready to play the opening hymn. His eyes were on the music, and his fingers were on the keys. He began pressing the keys, but there was no sound. I whispered to Wendy, "He has no power." I reasoned that something had stopped the flow of electrical power to that organ.

Well, brethren, in like manner, I fear that there are too many men who have been given the *authority* of the priesthood but who lack priesthood *power* because the flow of power has been blocked by sins such as laziness, dishonesty, pride, immorality, or preoccupation with things of the world.

I fear that there are too many priesthood bearers who have done little or nothing to develop their ability to access the powers of heaven. I worry about all who are impure in their thoughts, feelings, or actions or who demean their wives or children, thereby cutting off priesthood power.

I fear that too many have sadly surrendered their agency to the adversary and are saying by their conduct, "I care more about satisfying my own desires than I do about bearing the Savior's power to bless others."

I fear, brethren, that some among us may one day wake up and realize what power in the priesthood really is and face the deep regret that they spent far more time seeking power over others or power at work than learning to exercise fully the power of God.⁴ President George Albert Smith taught that "we are not here to while away the hours of this life and then pass to a sphere of exaltation; but we are here to qualify ourselves day by day for the positions that our Father expects us to fill hereafter."⁵

Why would any man waste his days and settle for Esau's mess of pottage⁶ when he has been entrusted with the possibility of receiving all of the blessings of Abraham?⁷

I urgently plead with each one of us to live up to our privileges as bearers of the priesthood. In a coming day, *only* those men who have taken their priesthood seriously, by *diligently* seeking to be taught by the Lord Himself, will be able to bless, guide, protect, strengthen, and heal others. Only a man who has paid the price for priesthood power will be able to bring miracles to those he loves and

keep his marriage and family safe, now and throughout eternity.

What is the price to develop such priesthood power? The Savior's senior Apostle, Peter—that same Peter who with James and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery⁸—declared qualities we should seek to "be partakers of the divine nature."⁹

He named faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, and diligence.¹⁰ And don't forget humility!¹¹ So I ask, how would our family members, friends, and coworkers say you and I are doing in developing these and other spiritual gifts?¹² The more those attributes are developed, the greater will be our priesthood power.

How else can we increase our power in the priesthood? We need to pray from our hearts. Polite recitations of past and upcoming activities, punctuated with some requests for blessings, cannot constitute the kind of communing with God that brings enduring power. Are you willing to pray *to know how to pray* for more

power? The Lord will teach you.

Are you willing to search the scriptures and feast on the words of Christ¹³—to study *earnestly* in order to have more power? If you want to see your wife's heart melt, let her find you on the Internet studying the doctrine of Christ¹⁴ or reading your scriptures!

Are you willing to worship in the temple regularly? The Lord loves to do His own teaching in His holy house. Imagine how pleased He would be if you asked Him to teach you about priesthood keys, authority, and power as you experience the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood in the holy temple.¹⁵ Imagine the increase in priesthood power that could be yours.

Are you willing to follow President Thomas S. Monson's example of serving others? For decades he has taken the long way home, following promptings of the Spirit to arrive on someone's doorstep and then hear words such as, "How did you know it was the anniversary of our daughter's death?" or "How did you know it was my birthday?" And if you truly want more priesthood power, you will cherish and care for your wife, embracing both her *and* her counsel.

Now, if all of this sounds excessive, please consider how different our relationships with our wife, children, and associates at work would be if we were *as* concerned about gaining priesthood power as we are in progressing at work or increasing the balance in our bank account. If we will humbly present ourselves before the Lord and ask Him to teach us, He will show us how to increase *our* access to *His* power.

In these latter days, we know there will be earthquakes in diverse places.¹⁶ Perhaps one of those diverse places will be in our own homes, where emotional, financial, or spiritual "earthquakes" may occur. Priesthood power can calm the seas and heal fractures in the earth. Priesthood power can also calm the minds and heal fractures in the hearts of those we love.

Are we willing to pray, fast, study, seek, worship, and serve as men of God so we can have that kind of priesthood power? Because two little girls were so eager to be sealed to their family, their father and brother were willing to pay the price to bear the holy Melchizedek Priesthood.

My dear brethren, we have been given a sacred trust—the authority of God to bless others. May each one of us rise up as the man God foreordained us to be—ready to bear the priesthood of God bravely, eager to pay whatever price is required to increase his power in the priesthood. With *that* power, we can help prepare the world for the Second Coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. This is His Church, led today by His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, whom I dearly

Church, led today by His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, whom I dearly love and sustain. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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