

Inspired Ministering

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By President Henry B. Eyring
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

We receive the Holy Spirit best when we are focused on serving others. That is why we have the priesthood responsibility to serve for the Savior.

My beloved brethren, I am grateful for the privilege of speaking to you in this historic general conference. We have sustained President Russell M. Nelson as the 17th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As I have had the blessing of working with him each day, I have felt a confirmation of the Spirit that President Nelson is called of God to lead the Lord's true Church.

It is also my witness that the Lord has called Elder Gerrit W. Gong and Elder Ulisses Soares to serve as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I love and sustain them. They will, by their ministry, bless lives across the world and across generations.

This conference is historic for yet another reason. President Nelson has announced an inspired step forward in the Lord's organized plan for His Church. That plan includes a new structure for priesthood quorums in wards and stakes so that we may better fulfill our priesthood responsibilities. Those responsibilities all have to do with our priesthood care of our Father's children.

The Lord's plan for His Saints to provide loving care has taken many forms over the years. In the early days of Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith needed an organized way to care for the flood of largely impoverished converts coming into the city. Four of my great-grandparents were among them—the Eyrings, Bennions, Romneys, and Smiths. The Prophet organized the care of those Saints by geography. In Illinois those divisions of the city were called “wards.”

As the Saints moved across the plains, their care for each other was organized in “companies.” One of my paternal great-grandfathers was returning from his mission in what is now Oklahoma when he met a company on the trail. He was so weak with disease that he and his companion were on their backs in a little wagon.

The leader of the company sent two young women to help whoever might be in that forlorn wagon. One of them, a young sister who had been converted in Switzerland, took a look at one of the missionaries and felt compassion. He was saved by that company of Saints. He recovered enough to walk the rest of the way to the Salt Lake Valley with his young rescuer by his side. They fell in love and married. He became my great-grandfather Henry Eyring, and she my great-grandmother Maria Bommeli Eyring.

Years later, when people remarked at the great difficulty of moving across a continent, she said, “Oh no, it wasn't hard. While we walked, we talked the whole way about what a miracle it was

that we had both found the true gospel of Jesus Christ. It was the happiest time I can remember.”

Since then, the Lord has used a variety of ways to help His Saints care for each other. Now He has blessed us with strengthened and unified quorums at the ward and stake levels—quorums that work in coordination with all ward organizations.

Municipal wards, companies, and strengthened quorums have all required at least two things to be successful in the Lord’s intent to have His Saints care for each other in the way He cares for them. They succeed when the Saints feel the love of Christ for each other above their self-interest. The scriptures call it “charity ... the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). And they succeed when the Holy Ghost guides the caregiver to know what the Lord knows is best for the person whom He is trying to help.

Time after time in recent weeks, members of the Church have acted in my presence as if somehow they had anticipated what the Lord was going to do, as has been announced here today. Let me give you just two examples. One, a simple sacrament meeting talk by a 14-year-old teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood who understands what priesthood holders can accomplish in their service for the Lord. Second, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder who, with the love of Christ, was inspired to serve a family.

First, let me give you the words of the young man speaking to a ward sacrament meeting. I was there. Try to remember what you were like when you were 14 years old and listen to hear him say more than so young a man could reasonably know:

“I have really liked being a member of the teachers quorum in our ward since I turned 14 last year. A teacher still has all the responsibilities of a deacon plus some new ones.

“Since some of us are teachers, others will be someday, and everyone in the Church is blessed by the priesthood, so it’s important for all of us to know more about the duties of a teacher.

“First of all, Doctrine and Covenants 20:53 says, ‘The teacher’s duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them.’

“Next, Doctrine and Covenants 20:54–55 says:

“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.”

The young man continued:

“The Lord is telling us it’s our responsibility to not only care for the Church but to also care for the people within the Church the way that Christ would because this is His Church. If we are trying to keep the commandments, be kind to each other, be honest, be good friends, and enjoy being together, then we will be able to have the Spirit with us and know what Heavenly Father wants us to do. If we don’t, then we can’t fulfill our calling.”

He went on to say:

“When a teacher chooses to set the right example by being a good home teacher, greeting the members at church, preparing the sacrament, helping at home, and being a peacemaker, he’s choosing to honor his priesthood and fulfill his calling.

“Being a good teacher doesn’t only mean being responsible when we are at church or at Church activities. The Apostle Paul taught, ‘Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity’ (1 Timothy 4:12).”

Then the young man said:

“No matter where we are or what we are doing, we can be a good example of righteousness at all times and in all places.

“My dad and I home teach the Browns.¹ Every time we go over there, I have a great time visiting and getting to know them. One thing I really like about the Browns is whenever we go over there, they are all willing to listen and they always have good stories to share.

“When we know people in the ward well because of home teaching, it makes it easier to do the next duty of a teacher, and that’s greeting the members at church. Helping people feel welcome and included at church helps all the members of the ward feel loved and prepared to take the sacrament.

“After greeting members who have come to church, teachers help each Sunday by preparing the sacrament. I really enjoy passing and preparing the sacrament in this ward because everyone is so reverent. I always feel the Spirit when I prepare and pass the sacrament. It’s a real blessing to me that I’m able to do it every Sunday.

“Some service like passing the sacrament is something people see and they thank us for doing it, but other service like preparing the sacrament is usually done without anyone noticing. It *isn’t* important if people see us serving; what’s important is that the Lord knows we have served Him.

“As teachers, we should always try to strengthen the Church, our friends, and our family by fulfilling our priesthood responsibilities. It’s not always easy, but the Lord gives no commandments to us ‘save he shall prepare a way for [us to] accomplish the thing which he commandeth’ (1 Nephi 3:7).”

As that young man concluded, I continued to be amazed at his maturity and wisdom. He summarized by saying, “I know we will become better if we choose to follow [Jesus Christ].”

Another story of priesthood service was told a month ago in a ward sacrament meeting. Again, I was there. In this case, the seasoned Melchizedek Priesthood holder didn’t know as he spoke that he was describing exactly what the Lord desires to happen with strengthened priesthood quorums. Here is the gist of his account:

He and a home teaching companion were assigned to serve seven families. Almost all of them did *not* want visits. When the home teachers went to their apartments, they refused to answer the door. When they telephoned, they did not get an answer. When they left a message, the call was not returned. This senior companion finally resorted to a letter-writing ministry. He even began to use bright yellow envelopes in the hope of getting a response.

One of the seven families was a less-active single sister who had emigrated from Europe. She had two young children.

After many attempts to contact her, he received a text message. She abruptly informed him that she was too busy to meet with home teachers. She had two jobs and was in the military as well. Her primary job was that of a police officer, and her career goal was to become a detective and then return to her native country and continue her work there.

The home teacher never was able to visit with her in her home. He periodically texted her. Every month he sent a handwritten letter, supplemented with holiday cards for each child.

He received no response. But she knew who her home teachers were, how to contact them, and that they would persist in their priesthood service.

Then one day he received an urgent text from her. She desperately needed help. She did not know who the bishop was, but she did know her home teachers.

In a few days, she had to leave the state for a monthlong military training exercise. She could not take her children with her. Her mother, who was going to care for her children, had just flown to Europe to care for her husband, who had a medical emergency.

This less-active single sister had enough money to buy a ticket to Europe for her youngest child but not for her 12-year-old son, Eric.² She asked her home teacher if he could find a good LDS family to take Eric into their home for the next 30 days!

The home teacher texted back that he would do his best. He then contacted his priesthood leaders. The bishop, who was the presiding high priest, gave him approval to approach members of the ward council, including the Relief Society president.

The Relief Society president quickly found four good LDS families, with children about Eric's age, who would take him into their homes for a week at a time. Over the next month, these families fed Eric, found room for him in their already crowded apartments or small homes, took him on their previously planned summer family activities, brought him to church, included him in their family home evenings, and on and on.

The families with boys Eric's age included him in their deacons quorum meetings and activities. During this 30-day period, Eric was in church every Sunday for the first time in his life.

After his mother came home from her training, Eric continued to attend church, usually with one of these four volunteer LDS families or others who had befriended him, including his mother's visiting teachers. In time, he was ordained a deacon and began passing the sacrament regularly.

Now let us look into Eric's future. We will not be surprised if he becomes a leader in the Church in his mother's home country when his family returns there—all because of Saints who worked together in unity, under the direction of a bishop, to serve out of charity in their hearts and with the power of the Holy Ghost.

We know that charity is essential for us to be saved in the kingdom of God. Moroni wrote, "Except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God" (Moroni 10:21; see also Ether 12:34).

We also know that charity is a gift bestowed upon us after all we can do. We must “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48).

It seems to me that we receive the Holy Spirit best when we are focused on serving others. That is why we have the priesthood responsibility to serve for the Savior. When we are engaged in service to others, we think less about ourselves, and the Holy Ghost can more readily come to us and help us in our lifelong quest to have the gift of charity bestowed upon us.

I bear you my witness that the Lord has already begun a great step forward in His plan for us to become even more inspired and charitable in our priesthood ministering service. I am grateful for His love, which He so generously gives us. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.