

# Ministering with the Power and Authority of God

## April 2018 General Conference

By President Russell M. Nelson

We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving kindness.

My beloved brethren, thank you for your devotion to the Lord and His holy work. It is truly a joy to be with you. As a new First Presidency, we thank you for your prayers and for your sustaining efforts. We are grateful for your lives and for your service to the Lord. Your devotion to duty and your selfless service are just as important in your callings as ours are in our callings. Through a lifetime of service in this Church, I have learned that it really doesn't matter *where* one serves. What the Lord cares about is *how* one serves.

I express deep gratitude for President Thomas S. Monson, who was an example to me for more than 50 years. And for his counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, I express profound admiration. I commend them for their service to the Lord and His prophets. Both of these devoted servants have received new assignments. They continue to serve with vigor and commitment. I honor and love them both.

It is a remarkable blessing to serve in the Lord's true and living Church with His authority and power. The restoration of the priesthood of God, including the keys of the priesthood, opens to worthy Latter-day Saints the greatest of all spiritual blessings. We see those blessings flowing to women, men, and children throughout the world.

We see faithful women who understand the power inherent in their callings and in their endowment and other temple ordinances. These women know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen their husbands, their children, and others they love. These are spiritually strong women who lead, teach, and minister fearlessly in their callings with the power and authority of God!<sup>1</sup> How thankful I am for them!

Likewise, we see faithful men who live up to their privileges as bearers of the priesthood. They lead and serve by sacrifice in the Lord's way with love, kindness, and patience. They bless, guide, protect, and strengthen others by the power of the priesthood they hold. They bring miracles to those they serve while they keep their own marriages and families safe. They shun evil and are mighty elders in Israel.<sup>2</sup> I am most thankful for them!

Now, may I voice a concern? It is this: Too many of our brothers and sisters do not fully understand the concept of priesthood power and authority. They act as though they would rather satisfy their own selfish desires and appetites than use the power of God to bless His children.

I fear that too many of our brothers and sisters do not grasp the privileges that could be theirs.<sup>3</sup> Some of our brethren, for example, act like they do not understand what the

priesthood is and what it enables them to do. Let me give you some specific examples.

Not long ago, I attended a sacrament meeting in which a new baby was to be given a name and a father's blessing. The young father held his precious infant in his arms, gave her a name, and then offered a beautiful *prayer*. But he did *not* give that child a blessing. That sweet baby girl got a name but no blessing! That dear elder did not know the difference between a prayer and a priesthood blessing. With his priesthood authority and power, he could have blessed his infant, but he did not. I thought, "What a missed opportunity!"

Let me cite some other examples. We know of brethren who set sisters apart as Primary, Young Women, or Relief Society leaders and teachers but fail to bless them—to bless them with the power to fulfill their callings. They give only admonitions and instructions. We see a worthy father who fails to give his wife and his children priesthood blessings when that is exactly what they need. Priesthood power has been restored to this earth, and yet far too many brothers and sisters go through terrible trials in life without ever receiving a true priesthood blessing. What a tragedy! That's a tragedy that we can eliminate.

Brethren, we hold the holy priesthood of God! We have His authority to bless His people. Just think of the remarkable assurance the Lord gave us when He said, "Whomsoever you bless I will bless."<sup>4</sup> It is our privilege to act in the name of Jesus Christ to bless God's children according to His will for them. Stake presidents and bishops, please ensure that every member of the quorums within your stewardship understands how to give a priesthood blessing—including the personal worthiness and spiritual preparation required to call fully upon the power of God.<sup>5</sup>

To all brethren holding the priesthood, I invite you to inspire members to keep their covenants, fast and pray, study the scriptures, worship in the temple, and serve with faith as men and women of God. We can help all to see with the eye of faith that obedience and righteousness will draw them closer to Jesus Christ, allow them to enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and experience joy in life!

A hallmark of the Lord's true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to individual children of God and their families.<sup>6</sup> Because it is His Church, we as His servants will minister to the one, just as He did.<sup>7</sup> We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving kindness.

An experience I had more than 60 years ago in Boston taught me just how powerful the privilege of ministering one-on-one can be. I was then a resident surgeon at the Massachusetts General Hospital—on duty every day, every other night, and every other weekend. I had limited time for my wife, our four children, and Church activity. Nonetheless, our branch president assigned me to visit the home of Wilbur and Leonora Cox with the hope that Brother Cox might come back into activity in the Church. He and Leonora had been sealed in the temple.<sup>8</sup> Yet Wilbur had not participated for many years.

My companion and I went to their home. As we entered, Sister Cox welcomed us warmly,<sup>9</sup> but Brother Cox abruptly walked into another room and closed the door.

I went to the closed door and knocked. After a moment, I heard a muffled "Come in." I opened the door to find Brother Cox sitting beside an array of amateur radio equipment. In that small room, he lit up a cigar. Clearly, my visit was not all that welcome.

I gazed about the room with wonderment and said, “Brother Cox, I have always wanted to learn more about amateur radio work. Would you be willing to teach me about it? I’m sorry I can’t stay any longer tonight, but could I come back another time?”

He hesitated for a moment and then said yes. That was the beginning of what became a wonderful friendship. I returned and he taught me. I began to love and respect him. Through our subsequent visits, the greatness of this man emerged. We became very good friends, as did our dear eternal companions. Then, with the passage of time, our family moved away. Local leaders continued to nurture the Cox family.<sup>10</sup>

About eight years after that first visit, the Boston Stake was created.<sup>11</sup> Can you guess who its first stake president was? Yes! Brother Cox! During subsequent years, he also served as a mission president and a temple president.

Years later, I, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was assigned to create a new stake in Sanpete County, Utah. During the usual interviews, I was pleasantly surprised to encounter again my dear friend Brother Cox! I felt impressed to call him as the new stake patriarch. After I ordained him, we embraced each other and wept. People in the room were wondering why these two grown men were crying. But we knew. And Sister Cox knew. Ours were tears of joy! We silently remembered the incredible journey of love and repentance that began more than 30 years ago, one night in their home.

The account doesn’t end there. Brother and Sister Cox’s family grew to include 3 children, 20 grandchildren, and 54 great-grandchildren. Add to that their impact on hundreds of missionaries, on thousands more in the temple, and on hundreds more who received patriarchal blessings at the hands of Wilbur Cox. His and Leonora’s influence will continue to ripple through many generations throughout the world.

Experiences such as this with Wilbur and Leonora Cox occur every week—hopefully, every day—within this Church. Dedicated servants of the Lord Jesus Christ carry out His work, with His power and authority.

Brethren, there are doors we can open, priesthood blessings we can give, hearts we can heal, burdens we can lift, testimonies we can strengthen, lives we can save, and joy we can bring into the homes of the Latter-day Saints—all because we hold the priesthood of God. We are the men who have been “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of [our] exceeding faith,” to do this work.<sup>12</sup>

Tonight I invite you literally to rise up with me in our great eternal brotherhood. When I name your priesthood office, please stand and remain standing. Deacons, please arise! Teachers, arise! Priests! Bishops! Elders! High priests! Patriarchs! Seventies! Apostles!

Now, brethren, will you please remain standing and join with our chorus in singing all three verses of “Rise Up, O Men of God.”<sup>13</sup> While you sing, think of your duty as God’s mighty army to help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. This is our charge. This is our privilege. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

