



Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting

J U N E 2 1 , 2 0 0 3

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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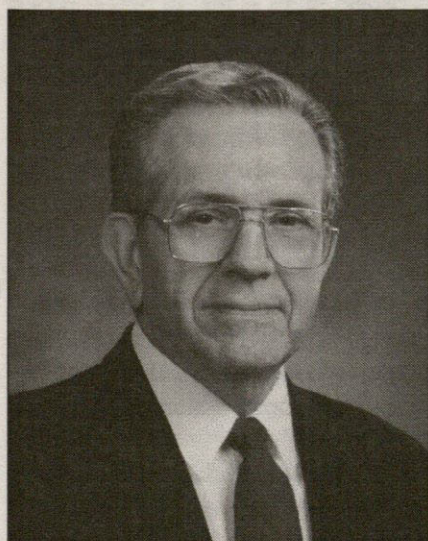
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PRESIDENT BOYD K. PACKER

Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

How to Confer the Priesthood

The Doctrine, the Principle, and the Practice



The Doctrine

The fifth article of faith is, "We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy [which is revelation], and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

My assignment is how to confer priesthood authority. What I tell you is found in the scriptures and outlined in more detail in the *Church Handbook of Instructions*.¹

The priesthood, "instituted [in heaven] from before the foundation of the world" (D&C 124:33), is sacred. "The rights of the priesthood

are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven" (D&C 121:36).

As authorized servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the responsibility of every holder of the priesthood, all of you, to foster godliness in your life, in your home, and in your callings in the Church.

The "greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

"Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

"And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh" (D&C 84:19–21).

When the priesthood is solidly in place, everything else will fit together. The authority and power of the priesthood form the foundation of all that we do in the Church.

The Principle

All offices derive power and authority from the priesthood. Stakes, missions, wards, quorums, auxiliaries, meetings, councils—all depend on priesthood direction.

I will speak about both ordination and setting apart.

Those who hold the keys of authority approve an ordination in the priesthood or authorize a person to be set apart to serve.

In a stake or mission, the president is given priesthood keys. In a quorum, the president is given priesthood keys. In a ward, the bishop is given priesthood keys. Auxiliary presidents do not receive keys.

Choosing those to ordain or set apart

First, let me explain how to choose one to be ordained to an office in the priesthood or set apart to lead or to teach.

As a presidency or a bishopric, you counsel and pray, individually and together, about who should be called. The answer comes by revelation.

The scriptures teach, "You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right" (D&C 9:8; italics added).

The priesthood must not be conferred upon a man or a boy who is unrepenting or unwilling to live by the covenants connected with it.

For both ordinations and settings apart, you interview to determine:

- Are they worthy of the call?
- Will they accept the call?
- If they are married, will their spouse support them?
- Are there family, work, or health problems which might interfere with their service?

Extending the call

A call is more than an invitation or a request. It is a call from the Lord through His chosen servant. Years ago, President Spencer W. Kimball, then president of a stake in Arizona, had an experience with extending a calling. There was a vacancy in the president of the Young Men organization in the stake. President Kimball

left his desk at the bank, walked down the street a few doors into a business, and said, "Jack, how would you like to be president of the Young Men in the stake?"

Jack said, "Oh, Spencer, you don't mean me."

He said, "Of course I do. You're a young man, and you get along with young people. You'd make a very good president."

Then there occurred what President Kimball thought was a very disagreeable conversation because Jack turned down the call. He went back to the bank and sat at his desk, smoldering over his failure. Then it came to him. He left his desk, went down the street—same door, same man—called him by his full name, and said, "Last Sunday the stake presidency met to consider a vacancy in the Young Men's president. We prayed about it, talked about it. Finally, on our knees, we inquired about it and received the inspiration from the Lord that you should be called. As a servant of the Lord, I am here to deliver that call."

Jack said, "Well, Spencer, if you're going to put it that way."

And he said, "I'm putting it that way."

Now it is more than just an invitation. It is a call from the Lord through His servant.

Sustaining

The Lord said, "It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority"—that is why the sustaining takes place, so that it can be known to the Church that he has authority—"and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).

In order that all may know in the Church who is leading, there must be

a sustaining. The scriptures teach, "No person is to be ordained to any office in this church, where there is a regularly organized branch [or stake or ward] of the same, without the vote of that church" (D&C 20:65).

"All things must be done in order, and by common consent" (D&C 28:13; see also D&C 26:2), "by the *voice of the church*" (D&C 38:34, italics added; see also D&C 41:9).

Now, the procedure for sustaining: when a name is presented, a sustaining vote is taken by the uplifted hand. The officer then asks if there are any opposed. If someone votes in opposition, then a designated priesthood leader will meet with him or her in a private meeting afterward to determine if the dissent has merit.

Only in an emergency does an ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood take place without sustaining or by sustaining only in a ward. And then the ordination is presented later for proper ratification.

Conferring priesthood authority

Now, about ordinations: an office in the priesthood, either Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, is conferred by ordination.

The word *ordain* is used when an office in the priesthood is given. The offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood are elder (the Melchizedek Priesthood is conferred first), high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle.

The offices in the Aaronic Priesthood are deacon (the Aaronic Priesthood is conferred first), teacher, priest, and bishop (the bishop must be a high priest [see D&C 68:14–15, 19; 107:17, 69–71]).

One is ordained or set apart by the laying on of hands of one who either holds the keys or is delegated to do so. Since ancient times, authority has been conferred or blessings given by the laying on of hands (see Numbers 27:18, 22–23; Acts 6:5–6; Alma 6:1).

In this simple, dignified manner, we confirm new members of the Church and seal anointings in administering to the sick. It is the same when patriarchs give a blessing or a father gives a father's blessing.

The priesthood is conferred only once. In the future, the priesthood holder can simply be ordained to another office. When a deacon is ordained, the Aaronic Priesthood is conferred upon him first; then he is ordained a deacon, an office in that priesthood. When an elder is ordained, the Melchizedek Priesthood is conferred upon him; then he is ordained an elder, an office in that priesthood.

All ordinations and settings apart must be by or under the direction of the presiding authorities. The priesthood can only be conferred by one who has priesthood authority and is authorized by one who holds the appropriate keys.

An ordination to an office in the priesthood is permanent and follows one ordained wherever he goes. Except for transgression, he is never released.

One set apart will eventually be released by the same authority by which he was called.

A high priest ordained as a bishop is also set apart to preside over a ward. He will be released from presiding over a ward, but his ordination as bishop remains. If he is called to preside over another ward, he need only to be set apart.

All ordained offices, except bishop and patriarch, are organized into quorums.

The rights and privileges of each priesthood office and the number in each quorum are explained in the scriptures and in the handbook.²

It is by setting apart that priesthood keys and authority are given to stake presidents, bishops, mission presidents, temple presidents, and quorum presidents.

The words *setting apart* are used when members receive special responsibilities, such as an auxiliary presidency, or a teacher, or a missionary, or others, but they do not receive or have keys.

When someone is set apart to serve as a leader or teacher, there are boundaries such as a ward, branch, stake, district, quorum, or mission. A bishop is not a bishop outside of his ward, for instance.

The Practice

To participate in an ordination, one must have equal or higher priesthood authority than is to be given in the ordinance. For instance, an elder should not stand in the circle where a high priest is ordained or a man is set apart to an office requiring him to be a high priest. Only presiding authorities can set apart presidents with keys.

When one is to be ordained or set apart, the one officiating places his hands on his head. If there are two other brethren, they will place their hands on his head as well. The officiator would say the person's full name and then express the authority by which he acts, the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. And then he would give the office to him and pronounce a blessing.



Now, in case more brethren participate in the ordination, each one puts his right hand on the head of the one being ordained and his left hand on the shoulder of the brother

to his left. In that way, the circle is complete. The ordination or setting apart then takes place—just a simple, dignified ceremony.



The support of family and friends is greatly appreciated. However, the number of men who stand in the circle should be limited to a few. Those who perform the ordinance or preside are the only ones required. All others merely provide support and sustain the spokesman. It is cumbersome and a burden if too many men participate. The practice of inviting large numbers of family, friends, and leaders to assist in an ordination or setting apart is discouraged.

The individual who performs the ordination or setting apart, I repeat:

- Calls the person by his full name.
- States the authority by which he performs the ordinance ("by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood").
- Confers the priesthood, in the first instance of receiving the priesthood.
- Ordains to the office in that priesthood together with the rights, powers, and authority of that office.
- Gives a blessing as the Spirit directs.
- Closes always in the name of Jesus Christ.³

A record is kept of all priesthood ordinations and settings apart of leaders of stakes, wards, missions, and temples.

An ordination or a setting apart is an opportunity to pronounce a blessing. A blessing is not to give counsel or instruction. That is done afterward when one is taught his duties.

There is no precise wording required. One of the great blessings of the Church is the way the priesthood is organized, with very few ordinances that must be word perfect and precise. We need not, indeed should not, memorize the blessing. As the Spirit directs, we might bless one in his home and his family and his work. He can be blessed with discernment and wisdom and understanding, with health. The words that we say will come by inspiration. Each blessing then is unique and personal to the individual member.

An ordination or a setting apart need not be expanded into a formal meeting. It is not necessary to have prayers or testimonies or instruction every time someone is ordained or set apart. It can be done quietly and with dignity in the presence of those especially concerned.

One does not aspire to a call nor request or resent a release. Both a call and a release are directed by inspiration of our leaders.

Worthiness

How crucial it is that we be worthy. Each must be absolutely faithful to his wife. Any attraction outside of marriage, however innocent, may be influenced by the adversary and lead straight to the bull's-eye of disaster.

Carefully observe the Word of Wisdom, that your body and your mind may be the instrument for revelation that is required in these ordinances.

If there is anything that is unworthy about you, if you have pictures or films or printed materials at home or at work that are unworthy, destroy

them so that there will be no evil influence surrounding you.

If you have made a misstep so serious that it should have been confessed, and it was not, seek for the healing balm of confession and repentance and forgiveness.

It is in this manner that ordinary men exercise the authority and the power of the “priesthood . . . after the holiest order of God” (D&C 84:18). Always we invoke these blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, whose Church this is. In this way, the unbroken chain of priesthood authority continues from generation to generation.

Remember, brethren! Remember! This is the Church of Jesus Christ. We have taken upon ourselves His name (see Moroni 4:3). We are commanded, “Whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name” (3 Nephi 27:7).

I bear witness of the Lord and of the sacred priesthood power which is conferred upon us and gratefully thank the Lord that we may participate through His inspiration to move the Church forward. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

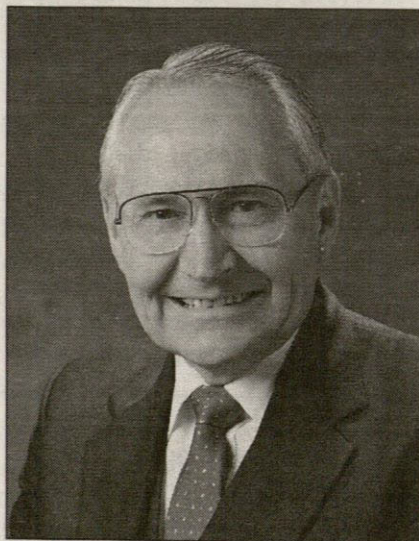
Notes

1. See *Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishoprics* (1998) and *Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998).
2. See D&C 20:38–47, 53–59, 70; 42:44; 46:2; 84:111; 107; see also *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, 161–62, 175–77.
3. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1*, 33; *Book 2*, 173; *Family Guidebook* (2001), 20–21; *Branch Guidebook* (2001), 12–13.

ELDER L. TOM PERRY

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Stake Administration



Priesthood Authority

One of the great blessings of the Restoration is to have the authority again to perform the ordinances that are binding in heaven as well as on earth. Without the authority of the priesthood, the Church itself could not have been restored, nor could it be governed by revelation.

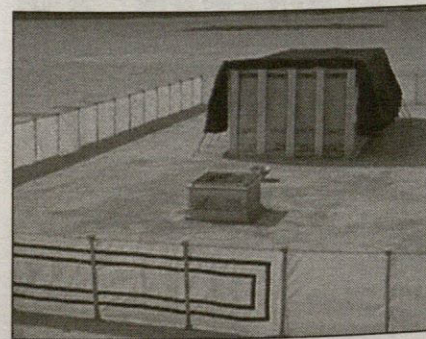
Following the fifth article of faith, which declares the restoration of the priesthood, is the sixth: “We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.”

My presentation is to cover the two organizational roles of pastor and teacher. A pastor is a priesthood leader, serving in a local Church unit. The pastors I have been assigned to speak on today are the stake president and those who serve with him in stake administration.

Sustaining Strength

“The word *stake* in the Church comes from the word *stake*, [meaning] a stick pounded in the ground. That word, as we use it, comes from the scriptures.

“The meaning of it goes back to the Old Testament when the Israelites, after being rescued from Egypt, were wandering in the desert. They built for themselves, under the direction of the Lord, a tabernacle. It was a prototype of a temple, and it was called the Tabernacle of the Testimony.



"It consisted of a building in which there were two rooms, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. . . . In [the Holy of Holies] was the Ark of the Covenant, the breast plate, and the Urim and Thummim.

"When they moved from one place to another, they could dismantle the tabernacle and move it about with them. When they set it up again, they put the tent-like building up, then they put a wall around it to form an outer court. . . . In order to keep the building up and the wall up, they drove stakes into the ground. A stake was a supporting unit of their tabernacle or their temple."¹

In keeping with this symbolism, in areas where we have concentrations of Church membership with priesthood strength which sustain and uphold the restored Church, these organized units are called stakes.

The Stake Presidency

Stake presidents are called to preside over a stake by revelation, by one who has the authority from the President of the Church to confer the keys of presidency.

Presiding over a stake is an awesome responsibility if the president assumes the burden all alone. However, the Lord has developed an organization that allows him to share these kinds of burdens. If he uses the organization properly, he can reach out to each one over whom he presides.

At the head of each stake there is a presidency of three Melchizedek Priesthood bearers—the president and two counselors. The stake president holds the keys to preside over his stake.

"These keys are the right to preside over and direct the Church within [his] jurisdiction. . . .

"The President of the Church authorizes presidents of . . . stakes; . . . bishops and branch presidents;

and quorum presidents to hold the priesthood keys they need to preside. A person who serves in one of these positions holds the keys only until he is released. Counselors do not receive keys, but they do receive delegated authority by calling and assignment."²

The Stake Clerk

In addition to counselors, the stake president selects a stake clerk and an executive secretary. I want to emphasize that both the stake clerk and the executive secretary are very important offices in the administration of the Church to assist the stake president in exercising the keys of his great assignment. Today I would like to give particular attention to the responsibilities of the stake clerk.

A stake clerk's responsibility falls under four main categories:

1. He is the financial officer of the stake. He is responsible for all the receipts and disbursements in the stake, to see that they are properly taken care of.
2. He is responsible for the membership records—to see that they are kept up-to-date and that every member is properly recorded, and to see that all baptisms, confirmations, priesthood ordinances, and

the sacred ordinances of the Church are properly recorded and that certificates are issued by the units of the stake.

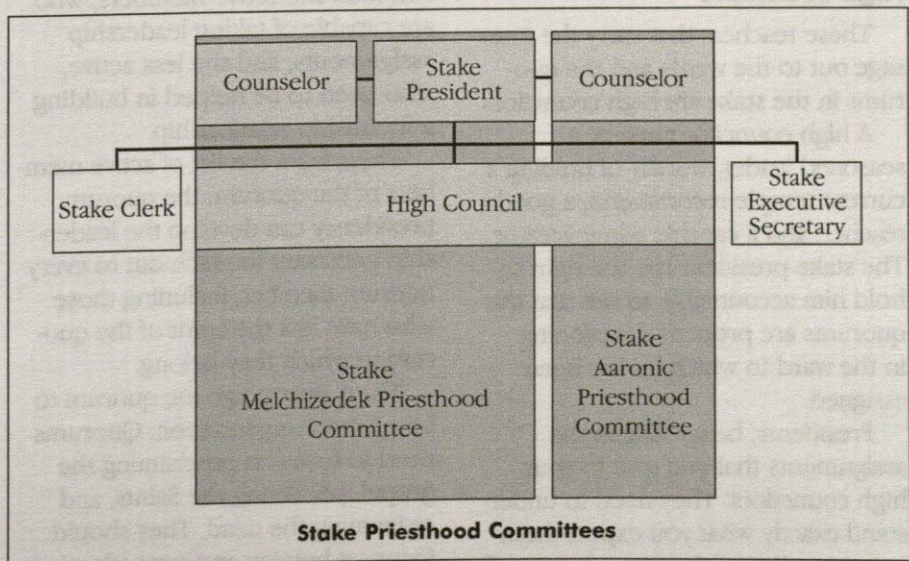
3. He is responsible for the statistical records. He must be a careful record keeper. The records are only as good as the accuracy by which they are maintained.
4. He is responsible for the historical record. He supplies the organizational memory of the stake. He is the carryover officer who has the organizational memory that will help orient the new stake presidency to prepare to fulfill their important assignments.

One of the responsibilities of the stake clerk is to be a teacher and trainer. He should go out to the wards and teach and train the ward clerks in their duties and responsibilities.

Stake Priesthood Committees

In each stake there is an organization—a priesthood executive council, comprised of the stake presidency and high council—that forms two very important committees to assist the stake presidency:

1. The Melchizedek Priesthood committee, presided over by the stake president, with *either counselor*



in the stake presidency assigned as *vice chairman*.

2. The Aaronic Priesthood committee, presided over by the other counselor in the stake presidency. This committee, with the aid of the stake Young Men's presidency, provides support for each bishopric with the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward.

In each ward is an elders quorum and a high priests group. The stake president is responsible to see that every man understands his duty: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence" (D&C 107:99).

The stake president's prime responsibility is to teach and train priesthood leaders so that they will understand their duty and act in the office to which they have been called. And please notice, the scripture reads, "in all diligence." Now, the Lord has provided a way for the stake president to train diligently all these priesthood leaders. Through the Melchizedek Priesthood committee, he has teachers to whom he can delegate this responsibility for the training of priesthood quorums in their particular duties.

High Councilors

These teachers that carry the message out to the wards and the quorums in the stake are high councilors.

A high councilor must be a seasoned leader, worthy of holding a current temple recommend, a good teacher, and a capable administrator. The stake president has the right to hold him accountable to see that the quorums are properly functioning in the ward to which he has been assigned.

Presidents, be specific in the assignments that you give to your high councilors. They need to understand exactly what you expect them to accomplish as they go out to teach

and train the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums of the Church.

Now, let me suggest some ways that high councilors can teach and train the leaders of the quorum to which they have been assigned.

There are three important functions in a quorum.

First, the quorum is a class. A quorum nourishes the members with the good word of God. High councilors, you are to observe to see that each quorum has a capable teacher assigned to teach the doctrines of the kingdom.

We have a great program in the Church, under the Sunday School presidency, called teacher improvement. This is coordinated by an individual who is a teaching resource to all the teachers in the ward. This teacher can train your quorum teachers to be more effective in their assignments and build a gospel foundation in the lives of the members of that particular quorum.

Second, a quorum is a brotherhood. See that each member of the quorum has a friend. I call your attention to what we taught you last January. Take an inventory of the quorum members. Then sit down with your quorum presidency. Using the inventory, divide the names into two lists: the active members, who are capable of taking leadership assignments, and the less active, who need to be helped in building a friendship relationship.

Then, from the list of active members of the quorum, the quorum presidency can develop the leadership necessary to reach out to every quorum member, including those who have lost the spirit of the quorum to which they belong.

Third, encourage the quorum to be a service organization. Quorums need to focus on proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead. They should focus on helping and strengthening

each member of the quorum, including reactivating prospective elders and fellowshipping new converts.

High councilors, you are responsible to see that the quorum president or group leader understands his duty. Help him get organized so he can carry out the important functions to which he has been called.

Effective Quorum Organization

Each active member of the quorum should have an opportunity to be given an assignment. One assignment that is surely available to all is home teaching. In organizing home teaching, quorum presidents should devise it so that the strong take one who is not so strong as a companion to help develop within them the confidence of their particular assignment. Be certain as you visit each ward that the prospective elders and the less active are divided according to the strength of the priesthood quorum or group. Look at the number of active elders and the number of high priests, and ensure that the families of prospective elders are assigned to the quorum or group that has the available companionships to carry out that responsibility.

Remember the duties of a home teacher:

"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" (D&C 20:54-55).

Once again, we remind you of the last satellite broadcast. Teach your quorum leaders how to use an inventory list. From the list of total quorum members, make a second list of active members. You can count on these members to build your programs. Build and limit your programs based on the active strength you have in the quorum.

Keep in mind that for the basic units we have basic materials. For mature units we have general Church materials. Again, we remind you that bigger is not necessarily better. Church units should grow only as fast as the size and maturity of the unit permits.

Remember the basics. President Hinckley has continued to remind us, "Do the best you can." He did not say, "Do whatever you can" but emphasized, "Do your best."

We realize that some quorums do not have enough active priesthood strength. You stake presidents, if this is true in your stake, discuss with your high council ways to reach out and bring into activity the less-active members of your quorum. Extend yourself, in priority order, to where you can get the best results with the leadership base you possess—"Do the best you can."

You high councilors, remember to be certain that the quorums you are assigned to help teach and train are nourished with the good word of the gospel with a very effective class. Be certain that each member has a friend and is building a great brotherhood in the quorum. Be certain that each member has the opportunity to assist in quorum service.

Brethren, the organization is in place.

Nourishing Church Members

You stake presidents have the power to reach out to every member of your stake. You should work with the bishops in your stake to coordinate these efforts. See that you have active, functioning Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood committees in your stake, consisting of members of your high council. See that the high council is given direct responsibility to go out and teach and train quorums in how to function and provide support for the wards.

Brethren, if the right direction comes from the stake presidency, and if the training assignment is given specifically to the high council, you can build strong priesthood quorums that will touch the life of every member of your stake. Brethren, you have the responsibility. You have counselors, stake clerks, executive secretaries, and a high council to assist you.

Now it is your duty to see that it happens.

May the Lord bless you in the great assignment you have been given. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Boyd K. Packer, "The Twenty-Mark Note," Brigham Young University—Idaho devotional, 12 Mar. 2002.
2. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 161.

ELDER ROBERT D. HALES

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Calling and Responsibilities of a Bishop

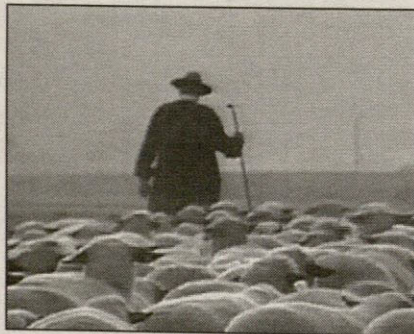


Shepherds of the Flock

Brethren, our Savior Jesus Christ is “the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Some years ago I went to a national championship and watched shepherds perform in competition. I learned an unforgettable lesson. The true shepherd does not run to and fro, chasing after the sheep. He walks among them and gains their trust. He teaches his sheepdogs and gives them assignments. Some will lead, and some will be behind. He then leads his sheep and goes before them. Along the way he uses

voice and hand signals to direct his trusty dogs. From his vantage point, he watches over the sheep and leads them where they need to go.



So it is with the true Shepherd: “The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth [them] by name, and leadeth them out” (John 10:3).

Bishops, you are the shepherds of the Lord’s flock. Knowing who you are is important. Now the question is what you are called to do.

Priesthood Keys

You are called, ordained, and set apart to watch over all who reside within the boundaries of your ward. To do that, you have been given keys to care for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the Saints, to help each member come unto Christ. These keys are real. I want you to understand that they are as real as the key

I hold in my hand. But your keys are not physical keys, like this one; they are *priesthood keys*.

The priesthood keys you have been given pertain to your role as the presiding high priest, the president of the Aaronic Priesthood and the priests quorum, and a common judge in Israel.

Now, some bishops are not aware they hold these keys. They are like the Lamanites who “were baptized with fire and . . . the Holy Ghost” and “knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20).

When I meet these bishops, they are often overwhelmed and burdened down; they do not realize all the resources that the Lord has provided them. In addition to their priesthood keys, they have been given the power of the priesthood, the Holy Ghost, the gift of discernment, councils, and their bishopric counselors. Let me assure you, bishops, with these resources your service can be a joy and a blessing in your lives.

So how do you use these keys? How do you exercise them? Let me give you an example from my own life.

One day, President Kimball asked me to come to his office. I was a new General Authority. It was 1975. Because of unusual circumstances, he was sitting with a married couple who was facing serious challenges in their marriage, with their children, and in their business.

When they finished telling their story, President Kimball turned and said, “This is Elder Hales. He has been called as an Assistant to the Twelve Apostles. I would like him to work with you. He will report back on the progress you are making.”

Can you see how President Kimball was acting as a shepherd? He was exercising his keys by giving me an assignment. He was using his resources.

I took the assignment. I met with the family and their priesthood leaders. Prompted by the Spirit, I called upon others to assist. I worked with that family for about six months until their problems were resolved.

President Kimball held the keys to give me that assignment. My point is this, bishops: you hold the keys to do the same thing in your own wards as you give callings and assignments.

Of course, there are a few things only you can do, but they are just a few. For example, only you can:

- call and set apart presidents.
- interview youth annually.
- interview members receiving their own endowment and those who are planning to be married in the temple.
- counsel members on serious matters.
- perform civil marriages.
- administer Church discipline in the ward.
- conduct tithing settlement.

You must spend your time exercising the keys that you have as they apply to these unique responsibilities. Everything else can be delegated and assigned to priesthood and auxiliary leaders working under your direction. And so you must learn to give them that direction and to trust them. You must understand the role you play in exercising your priesthood keys.

The Presiding High Priest

You are the presiding high priest in the ward. You direct the work of your elders quorum president and the high priests group leader.

Your stake president holds the keys to the Melchizedek Priesthood. With the high council, he is responsible to train these ward Melchizedek Priesthood leaders. But as the presiding high priest in the ward, you sit in council with them. You were called to listen, learn, and then give assignments.

In home teaching, you assign specific companions to the families that need them most. You call for reports. You follow up on assignments given. Always use your council meetings to do this, especially in missionary work, reactivation, and retention. Why? Every council member has been “given a gift by the Spirit of God. To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:11–12).

A Shepherd of Youth

You are also president of the Aaronic Priesthood and the priests quorum. You watch over the Primary children, young men, and young women. How do you do that?

Recently we asked the youth, “What was the most significant thing that happened in your life last year?” Among the very top answers was “an interview with my bishop.” Bishops, you hold the key to interview and guide your youth, to help them through the decade of decision that lies before them. Get to know them, their names, their goals, their fears. They worry about the future. They look to you and wonder how you have accomplished so much in your life, how you got through school, found a job, married your wife, and established your family. You can help them. You can teach them to hear the whisperings of the Holy Ghost—the Comforter—and find the confidence they need within.

My greatest joy with my own children and with every youth is to help them find their gifts and talents and discover who they really are. And then the light comes on, the light of the Spirit within them. They learn they are someone special, especially to the Lord.

As president of the Aaronic Priesthood, you not only help the youth, you help their parents. Involve parents; listen to them; learn from them how to help their children.

Along the way, the Spirit will show you how to bless their lives as well.

Sometimes it is hard for a father to talk with his children. You can be a catalyst. You can bring them together. Your priesthood keys will help you turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the children to their fathers. And that is the work of salvation.

So, bishops, do not underestimate who you are and what you can do. As a shepherd to families, you lead the youth on the path to the temple, a mission, and sealing for time and for all eternity.

A Common Judge in Israel

Now, you also are called to be a common judge in Israel. God has “appoint[ed] and ordain[ed] you to watch over the church” (D&C 46:27).

You have been given the gift of discernment to help you (see D&C 46:27). This gift will help you counsel members who have committed moral transgressions or other serious offenses. It will direct you where Church discipline is concerned. It will teach you how to be an effective shepherd—to discern those assignments that can be and should be given to others.

Overseeing Welfare

You also direct the welfare work of the ward. You are commanded to do this by “searching after the poor” (D&C 84:112). Sometimes those in need are temporally poor and need food and financial assistance. Sometimes they are poor in spiritual ways, having suffered injustices and even abuse.

Use the ward welfare committee to identify families and individuals in need. Counsel with your Relief Society president. Call on Melchizedek Priesthood leaders.

When assessing needs and identifying resources, first consider an individual’s own resources and then the

resources of the extended family. Then personally review and sign each request for welfare assistance before it is submitted.

Safeguarding Funds

As a bishop, you have the responsibility to safeguard the sacred funds of the Church. May I share three important principles in protecting these funds?

First, be certain that you, your counselors, and your clerks pay a full tithe and offerings. Only those who honor the Lord's law of finance can be trusted to handle His funds.

Second, honor the principle of companionship. There should always be two priesthood holders working side by side whenever funds are collected, counted, deposited, and dispensed.

Finally, do not leave funds unattended and unsecured. Where possible, use a bank with a 24-hour deposit box. With your priesthood companion, deposit funds on the same day they are collected, counted, and recorded.

Brethren, these principles are not only meant to protect the funds of the Church. I know by sad experience that when a person mishandles the Lord's resources, he risks losing his place in the kingdom. He may jeopardize his own faith and even weaken the faith of generations to come.

Having served earlier as the Presiding Bishop of the Church for nearly 10 years, I can say that there was never a mishandling of funds where these three principles were taught, applied, and lived faithfully.

Teaching Members

Remember, bishops, in everything you do you are teachers. Don't worry if you do not consider yourself a teacher; the Spirit can help you to become one, for the Spirit is given

"by the prayer of faith" (D&C 42:14). As you follow its holy promptings, you will be "apt to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2).

Teach especially in sacrament meetings, as a father teaches his family. In all your meetings, remember to feed the sheep. It is not enough just to give well-prepared talks and lessons. You must nourish—spiritually nourish—the members over whom you have responsibility. Build their testimonies, instill the Spirit of the Lord in them, and strengthen their commitment to be faithful to gospel principles.

Then, once a year, teach families in tithing settlement about the law of tithing. Bear your testimony, express your love, and join with them in prayer when appropriate.

Teaching families to be spiritually and temporally self-sufficient is the focus of a bishop's work. For when families take care of themselves, the entire flock is strengthened and protected.

Strengthening Families

Now, a word about strengthening families. Each of us must begin with our own family. One of the most important commandments for a bishop is found in Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives."

A real bishop will do in his own home what he is asking his ward priesthood leaders to do. He will go home from this meeting and sit down with his wife and ask her a very simple question: "Sweetheart, how can I be a better father and a better companion?" And then he will take the next half hour to hear what she has to say.

Listen with your heart, and make the necessary adjustments in your own life. Then you will be the caring shepherd in your own home.

You see, brethren, we must lay down our lives for our wives and our families just as the Savior laid down

His life for the Church and for each of us. Then we can represent Him. Then we can be more like Him.

You may be thinking, "Elder Hales, I don't have time to do everything." Let me share with you the best advice I was ever given on the subject.

- Generally, do not spend more than two nights a week away from your home on your calling—and one of those evenings should be spent visiting in the homes of the members.
- Tell your family in advance when you will be home, and keep your word no matter what—so that your car will drive into the driveway at the time you have said you would be there; so that Mother can say to the children, "Father will be home at a particular time," and they will know you will be there.
- Spend time each week with your wife and with each of your children.

Begin there. I promise if you will put your wife and your family first, you will not only be a better husband and father, you will become a better bishop.

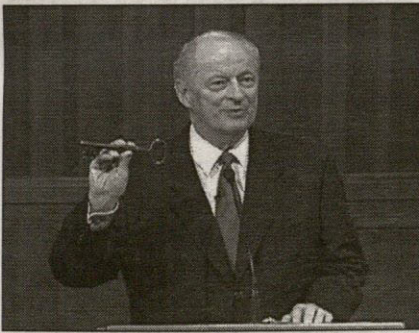
Above all, remember, oh, remember, your ward is a collection of families. The work of salvation goes forward with fathers and mothers leading their children, assisted by their bishop. That is why the most important thing you can accomplish is to help your families to the temple. And you hold the keys to do it.

Temple Blessings

Some years before the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated, President Wilford Woodruff had a dream. He saw many people milling about outside the temple. They were unhappy because they could not get into the temple. In that dream, President Brigham Young came to President

Woodruff. He gave him the keys to the temple.

This key which I hold is an original key to the gates of the Salt Lake Temple.



Brigham Young told President Woodruff to “open the door and let the people in.”¹

This key that I have in my hand is symbolic of the keys which we hold as bishops to unlock that marvelous gate of the temple. Remember, bishops, you hold those priesthood keys. Use them as the presiding high priest, as a common judge in Israel, and as the president of the Aaronic Priesthood. Use them to direct the priesthood and auxiliary leaders in your ward. Use them to open the door to *all* the blessings of the Lord’s true Church—and then let the people into the temple.

I bear witness that our Savior stands ready to welcome us all. He knows His sheep. They know His voice. And if you, the bishops of the Church, are faithful, His voice will be heard through you.

It does not matter how much experience you have had. The Church grows from generation to generation. Some of you stand on the shoulders of your boyhood priesthood leaders. How blessed you are!

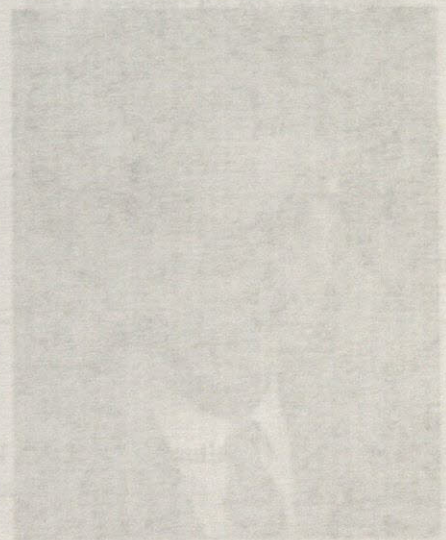
Some of you are pioneers—your shoulders will carry the next generation. It will be you who will be remembered and blessed in the years to come.

We love you. We thank you. We pray for you. And we know—yes, we *know*—that this is the divine work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and that He will make you equal to the mantle you bear. He will bless your homes, strengthen your children, and increase the love between you and your wife.

I testify that He is the Shepherd who gave His life for us. He is leading His Church. We are His flock, for He is the Good Shepherd, even “the Shepherd and Bishop of [our] souls” (1 Peter 2:25). I so pray and testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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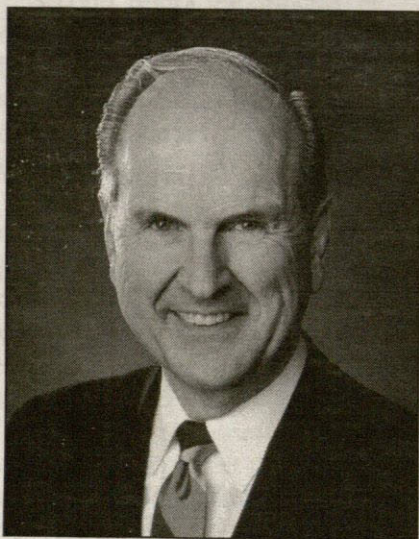
1. Loren C. Dunn, “The Temple is the ‘Heart of Sacred Work,’” *Church News*, 6 Feb. 1993, 12.



ELDER RUSSELL M. NELSON

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

How to Plan and Conduct Sacrament Meetings



Doctrinal Foundation

Thank you, brethren, for your devotion to the Lord and to His sacred work. I am humbly grateful to be with you. My teaching on sacrament meetings will be addressed particularly to you bishops and branch presidents and your counselors.

Many of you may be new in your assignment and somewhat apprehensive. Please do not be concerned. Not only will the people be served, but your families will be blessed because of your commitment to the Lord and to His Church.

Bishoprics and branch presidencies have many responsibilities that can be

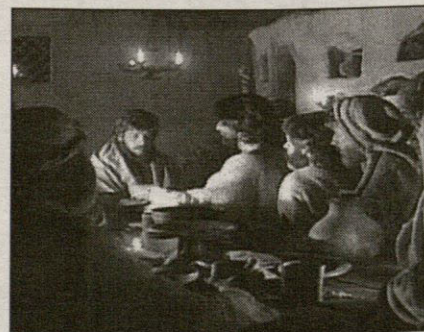
delegated. But you cannot delegate responsibility for sacrament meetings. Generally, you preside and are thus responsible for both the spirit and the content of these meetings.

This is the one ward or branch meeting that we attend as a family—the basic unit of the Church. Teach your family and members to arrive well before sacrament meeting begins. Teach them that we attend, as the Lord commanded, to receive the sacrament and renew our covenants. He instituted the sacrament to remind us of His Atonement.

As a final and specially prepared Passover supper was ending, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His Apostles, saying, “Take, eat” (Matthew 26:26). “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Then He took the cup, said a blessing of thanks, and passed it to those gathered about Him, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood” (Luke 22:20), “which is shed . . . for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). “This do . . . in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do [proclaim] the Lord’s death” (1 Corinthians 11:25–26). In this way, He linked the sacrament to His impending Crucifixion.

God had declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Then the Son of God voluntarily laid down His life to complete the will of His Father. Thus, immortality became a reality and eternal life a possibility for all who would ever live upon the earth. We commemorate His Atonement in a very personal way. We bring a broken heart and a contrite spirit to our sacrament meeting. It is the highlight of our Sabbath day observance (see D&C 59:8–13).

The sacramental prayers have been revealed by the Lord (see Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79). These prayers contain covenants *and* a promise. We covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and keep His commandments. We eat the broken bread in remembrance of His body. We drink the water in remembrance of His blood that was shed for us. And we witness that we will always remember Him. The promise: we will always have His Spirit to be with us. What a blessing!



Planning Sacrament Meeting

With these doctrines in mind, brethren, plan your sacrament meetings thoughtfully. Keep the purpose in mind: to focus upon the Lord and teach of His Atonement, His example, and the doctrines of the gospel.

Invitations to speak should be extended well in advance and

include a clear description of the topic assigned and time allotted, along with an offer to help.

Let those who pray include members who are not often called upon. Avoid patterns of prayers given by husband and wife in the same meeting. This conveys an unintentional message of exclusion to those who are single. And you may want to caution those invited to pray *not* to give a sermon.

Departing missionaries may be given an opportunity to speak in a sacrament meeting. Their family members and friends are not invited to speak. Two or more departing missionaries may speak in the same service.

Returning missionaries who have served honorably should be invited to speak in a sacrament meeting and be given time to share spiritual experiences and bear testimony.

Sacrament meetings afford an opportunity for youth to speak briefly on assigned gospel subjects. At other times high councilors will be assigned by the stake president to speak.

Consider calling members to serve as greeters and ushers. They can welcome worshipers and seat them comfortably, while holding a few rear and aisle seats for those with special needs.

Audiovisual materials such as videocassettes and transparencies should not be used in a sacrament meeting.

Occasionally members may be unable to attend because of illness. You may assign priesthood holders to administer the sacrament to them where they are confined.

A typical sacrament meeting will include prelude music; a welcome and acknowledgment of the presiding authority and representative from the high council, if assigned; and an opening hymn and prayer.

After the prayer, ward business is conducted, such as releasing and sustaining of ward officers and teachers; recognizing children who advance from Primary, members called on missions or other assignments, and the attainments of young men and young women; and presenting the names of brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood and the names of new ward members.

Following the ward business, the meeting continues with the confirmation of new members, a sacrament hymn and the administration of the sacrament, gospel messages and optional additional music, a closing hymn and prayer, and postlude music.

Those to be released and sustained do not need to be presented individually. They may be proposed as groups: first those to be released; then those to be sustained in the priesthood and those to be sustained for callings in the auxiliaries.

Brethren, please ensure that these meetings begin and end on time and are not overprogrammed. You need not hold a prayer meeting before sacrament meeting. You and others invited to participate should be seated at least five minutes before the meeting begins so you can be spiritually prepared for a worshipful experience.

During that quiet interval, prelude music is subdued. This is not a time for conversation or transmission of messages. Teach your people to respect their and your own period of prayerful meditation as you prepare spiritually for the sacrament.

Music

Brethren, teach your music director that the hymns of the Church are the basic music for worship services and the standard for congregational singing. Other appropriate selections may be used for prelude and postlude

A Typical Sacrament Meeting

Prelude music

Welcome and an acknowledgement of the presiding authority and representative from the high council, if assigned

Opening hymn and prayer

Ward business:

Releasing and sustaining ward officers and teachers

Recognizing

- children who advance from Primary,
- members called on missions or other assignments,
- attainments of young men and young women

Presenting

- brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood,
- new ward members

Confirmation of new members

Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament

Gospel messages and optional additional music

Closing hymn and prayer

Postlude music

music, choir music, and special musical selections. Opening and closing hymns are usually sung by the congregation. The sacrament hymn is always sung by the congregation.

Ideally, you would have a choir in your unit, with an invitation to sing periodically. A choir can bless lives. Sister Nelson and I have fond memories of our participation years ago in the choir of our small branch in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When we and the others came forward to sing, there were more of us in the choir than there were members remaining in the congregation.

Pianos, organs, or their electronic equivalents are the standard for use in Church meetings. If other instruments are used, their use should be in keeping with the spirit of the meeting. Instruments with a loud or less worshipful sound, such as most brass and percussion, are not appropriate for sacrament meeting. If a piano, organ, or accompanist is not available, appropriate recordings may be used for accompaniment.

The song of the righteous is a prayer unto the Lord (see D&C 25:12). Some members seem reluctant to sing, perhaps because of fear. Help them to forget themselves and sing as an opportunity to praise their Creator prayerfully. Music in sacrament meeting is for worship, not for performance.

Brethren, we depend upon you. Please do not let our sacred music slip away from us, nor allow secular music to replace it.

Conducting Sacrament Meeting

You dear brethren have responsibility not only to plan these meetings but to conduct them as well. Some in your congregation are praying for delicate promptings and delicate communication from heaven. You can help them by establishing a spirit of reverence. Reverence invites revelation.

In conducting the meeting, extend a cordial greeting. Detailed announcements are more appropriately handled some other time.

Because we invite all to come unto Christ, friends and neighbors are always welcome, but not expected to take the sacrament. However, it is not forbidden. They choose for themselves. We hope that newcomers among us will always be made to feel wanted and comfortable. Little children, as sinless beneficiaries of the Lord's Atonement, may partake of the sacrament as they prepare for covenants that they will make later in life.

Our meetings are always to be conducted as directed by the Spirit (see D&C 46:2). Occasionally something unexpected may arise that you may wish to clarify. Please respond to such promptings and make corrections, if needed. Otherwise, no additional commentary is given after the final speaker has spoken.

Administration of the Sacrament

Bishoprics and branch presidencies preside over the Aaronic Priesthood in wards and branches. You and advisers to your priesthood quorums will take every precaution to see that the sacrament is prepared in advance of the meeting and that the passing of the sacrament has been thoroughly planned.

Those who administer the sacrament are to look their best and be dressed appropriately. White shirts not only look nice, but they are a gentle reminder of other sacred rites, such as baptismal and temple ordinances, at which white clothing is also worn.

You may designate someone to help the deacons know who receives the sacrament first as the presiding authority.

Sacramental prayers are to be offered understandably because

he who prays is giving voice to covenants that others are making. Cleanliness and purity of heart are expected of those privileged to bless the sacrament.

Fast and Testimony Meetings

Fast and testimony meetings are held once a month, usually the first Sunday. Generally, babies are blessed on that day. After the sacrament, the conducting brother bears a brief testimony. He then invites members to bear brief, heartfelt testimonies of the Savior, His teachings, and the Restoration.

Parents and teachers should help children learn what a testimony is and when it is appropriate for them to express it. Younger children should learn to share their testimonies at home or in Primary until they are old enough to bear an appropriate testimony unaided in fast and testimony meeting.

Personal Participation

Each member of the Church bears responsibility for the spiritual enrichment that can come from a sacrament meeting. Each should sing with a grateful heart and respond with an audible "amen" at the conclusion of a prayer or a testimony.

We personally ponder the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We reflect upon the significance of His suffering at Gethsemane and His Crucifixion on Calvary. At this time each of us is to "examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28) and reflect upon personal covenants made with the Lord. At this time we meditate upon the sacred things of God.

Gratefully, I thank the Lord for the sacrament meeting and all that it has meant in my life. It has repeatedly rekindled my faith and allowed me to renew my covenants on a weekly basis, helping Sister Nelson and me

to live and rear our family in the glorious light of the gospel.

Brethren, I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is His Church, restored in these latter days to fulfill its divine destiny. I pray for the Lord's blessings to be upon each of you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“What Manner of Men Ought [We] to Be?”

(3 Nephi 27:27)



Gratitude for Those Who Serve

Brethren, I desire to praise you, to counsel you, and finally to remind you of a very precious promise that each of us has received.

First, may I thank you genuinely for your service as priesthood leaders. Sometimes you are going to be anxious about whether you are adequate or not, but you are probably doing better than you think. We commend you for your service.

Would you please accept our gratitude likewise for the way in which you serve Church members, including those who are quiet, second-mile members of the Church, whose deeds are often known only to you

and the Lord. These members are not high profile; they are meek and lowly. And these Church members, often unsung, need to be appreciated by each of us. As these Church members go so steadily and effectively about their labors, we should be more mindful of them than we sometimes are.

Recently I was musing aloud to President Packer about these wonderful, meek, and lowly members of the Church and said to him, “My admiration for them is such that in the next world, if they need to have their white robes taken out to be dry-cleaned, I would expect to be going around to pick them up.” And he said, quick as a flash, “And I’ll be doing the dry cleaning.” Please, let us bear in mind these faithful, meek, and lowly members among the flocks that you tend so well.

Becoming a “Man of Christ”

Now in that context of commendation, some counsel. Anciently, the resurrected Savior asked of priesthood leaders, and He did it quite searchingly, “What manner of men ought ye to be?” Jesus then prescribed that we should be “even as [He] is” (3 Nephi 27:27).

So we should be striving, attribute by attribute, to become more and more like Him, including developing

the spiritual manners which accompany living “after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

So, for us, putting off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19) and becoming instead a “man of Christ” (Helaman 3:29) does not occur automatically; it occurs “in [the] process of time” (Moses 7:21). So whether you are quietly exemplifying for your families or your Church flocks, there is no substitute for the eloquence of example.

The suggestions which now follow apply in every culture, in every economic situation. Some of these will focus on us as husbands and fathers, some will focus on us in our callings, and some will focus on both.

Brethren, the time remaining in your callings is limited. The clock is running. But you will never be released as a father or a husband. These are eternal callings, and they do not change when you move.

Personal Preparation

So, may I speak about personal preparation?

Your first duty is to obtain and retain the witness of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ (see D&C 46:13–14). When we know, those whom we serve will know that we know. And that is incredibly important. Furthermore, that member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost, prompts us as His shepherds.

Now, these promptings, I’ve found as I’m sure you have, are not always convenient; they are often very demanding. And sometimes the challenges that we face are almost overwhelming. When we feel overcome, He who overcame the world will help us (see John 16:33).

When you are exhausted, feast on the inexhaustible gospel. You will never plumb its depths or measure all its metes and bounds. So as you feast on the scriptures, you will be

renewed even when you are exhausted. Your families see you, as will your fellow-servants in the Church, when you are tired. We cannot hide the fatigue, so let them also see your resilience, which is connected with the promise that I will mention later.

Your children will one day leave your nest, but their love of the scriptures is portable, and the scriptures are portable. Let them carry, in addition to the scriptures, a memory of hearing your voice as patriarch, father, priesthood leader, as you read the scriptures aloud and as you liken the scriptures to yourself (see 1 Nephi 19:23). They will remember long after they have left the nest.

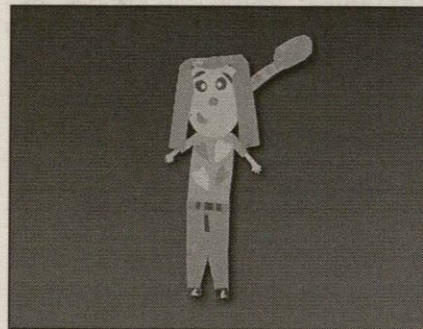
As President Packer indicated earlier, let us serve with clean hands and pure hearts. We have to shun pornography. We have to also avoid questionable business practices. Anything that would diminish us spiritually must be shunned.

Should you have any unresolved shortcomings yourself, go to the appropriate priesthood leader. We do not expect each other to be perfect in the kingdom, brethren, but we do not want our leaders swamped in self-pity. Self-pity makes us vulnerable.

Life and its events may bring to you your own allotment of adversity. This has to do with the manner of men that we ought to be. Accept adversity without becoming angry or bitter, and by so doing you will have testified in a unique and lasting way!

I think of young Melissa Howes and how she refused to become angry with God as her father, at age 43, approached death by cancer. During a family prayer just before her father died, Melissa said, according to her mother, “Heavenly Father, bless my daddy, and if you need him more than us, you can have him. We want him, but Thy will be done. And please help us not to be mad at you.”

Hanging on my office wall is a paper doll from Melissa to remind me of her prayer and of how she avoided becoming angry.



Family Responsibilities

Now as to our family responsibilities—

Since, as we all know, no other success can compensate for chronic failures in the family, inadequate leadership at home—chronically inadequate leadership—will sooner or later diminish our effectiveness in Church leadership.

We recognize you only have so many disposable hours. Please pace yourselves, doing things “in wisdom and order” (Mosiah 4:27; see also D&C 10:4). Let some of your prime time be given to your prime responsibilities—your wife and family! Otherwise, brethren, family gets only the leftovers. Besides, however good a day at work, it cannot compensate for a bad day at home.

Brethren, love your children’s mother. In an unsettled world, that special relationship simply must be solid and settled. Likewise, let your wife and children hear you pray over them *by name* in your family prayers.

Please give deserved and specific praise to your wife, your children, and the members of your flocks and quorums. The world puts people down, but you can lift them up, including by giving father’s blessings to your children.

My father was a shy and reluctant but wonderful man, and I had asked him for a father's blessing for many years. And he just felt so shy and reluctant that it didn't occur until later in my life. Yet in that blessing, my father anticipated my major illness by 20 years. And he used these words in blessing me: that I would have the "strength to bear the burdens which may come upon [me] in physical ways . . . that [I] may bear [them] as [Paul] did, without complaint." I am so grateful that a shy but sweet father gave me that father's blessing so many years ago. I still strive to measure up to it.

Our families experience our imperfections all the time. They see our shortfalls. Yet if they can see our spiritual strivings, they will with the breath of kindness blow the chaff away.



Not only during family home evenings but also during family meals, have some relaxed and low-key gospel conversations, where, in the words of scripture, we "talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26). A good leader is always a good listener, especially at home.

Dignity

Next, brethren, as called agents of the Lord—

Since you and I are preparing to live in a celestial culture, whatever exists in our temporary, local cultures

which conflicts with the gospel and its standards must simply fall away like so much old scaffolding. The fleeting fashions of the world will, ere long, become obsolete anyway (see 1 Corinthians 7:31). Meanwhile, we should not heed them.

Maintain your dignity and your grooming, even if you are in modest circumstances. In today's world, for instance, Church leaders are often among the few examples of appropriate grooming. Your appearance and your presence are your statements to others about how you see yourself and your callings and how you honor those who called you and sustain them.

We usually do not think of sustaining those who have called us to a position. We need to sustain them. It was the Sunday after he had been sustained as a Counselor in the First Presidency that President Marion G. Romney spoke in our ward, and at the pulpit he said, "I have always sustained the President of the Church, and I can sustain him even when he calls me as one of his Counselors." We have solemn obligations to sustain those who have called us.

Your spiritual dignity includes keeping confidences. The Lord, the Church member that you counsel, and you really constitute all those who have a need to know certain things. And that dignity, that confidentiality, simply must be maintained.

Let members and your family not only see you going to the temple, which reminds us what manner of men and women we ought to be, but let them also see how what is experienced there passes through you to improve you.

Serving and Leading

Now, brethren, if we will do these and like things day by day, we will become the "manner of men" desired by Jesus. Others will see *what we are* but also *what we are*

striving to become. They will see that we have truly taken upon us Christ's yoke and are humbly serving others (see Matthew 11:29).

Some years ago I was on an assignment with, then, Elder Howard Hunter in Cairo. We shared a hotel room and after a long, dusty day were resting up before the evening meetings. I asked if I could stretch out and nap a bit, and, of course, he said, "Please do." And then I awoke prematurely and found President Howard Hunter shining my shoes.

We are to be leader-servants and to bear in mind who we really are. It will be unmistakably conveyed. It will be indelibly imprinted upon the minds and the hearts of others. Granted, our love may not always be reciprocated, or even appreciated, but love is never wasted.

The Promise for Faithful Leaders

Now, finally, to the reminder of the promise given to you and to me and to all the faithful brethren—

That promise is, as you know, that the Lord will renew you in body. This is no small thing for those who seek to serve Him with unwearyingness (see D&C 84:33; Helaman 10:4–5).

During these blessed times of renewal, there will be moments, brethren, when the Spirit will wash over you like surf—to refresh you, to reassure you, and sometimes to brace you. The Holy Ghost will also let you know personally that the overseeing Lord of the universe knows and loves you personally. He has known you for such a long, long time. He is in the details of your lives. He is mindful, as the scriptures say, of His people in every nation, and surely He is likewise mindful of His priesthood leaders in every nation (see Alma 26:37).

After all, brethren, all those we love and serve are God's children!

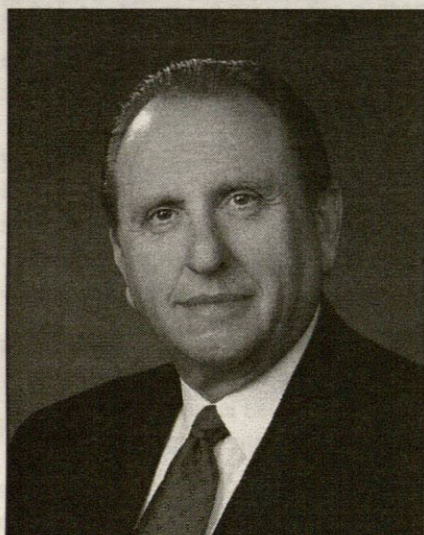
I so testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

First Counselor in the First Presidency

“A New Spirit Will I Put within You”

(Ezekiel 36:26)



Taking Specific Steps

I commend each of the speakers from whom we have heard. My memory goes back to a previous period when similar topics were presented by members of the Quorum of the Twelve to what was then called the general priesthood board meeting and were subsequently carried to priesthood leadership meetings in stake conference sessions.

At that time the Church was smaller—both numerically and geographically. How very grateful we are to benefit from modern technology, which provides instant worldwide communication.

When President Hinckley gave me the assignment to address you today, he directed that I speak as the Spirit of the Lord prompted me. With this preamble, I shall confine my remarks largely to ward and stake administration, interspersed with personal experiences from my own callings.

In 1959, at the time I presided over the Canadian Mission, Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, a General Authority, visited our mission. For 10 days we traveled together throughout Ontario and Quebec, where we met in member district conferences and missionary zone conferences, and at the conclusion of the tour we met with the leaders of member districts which soon would be combined to form a stake of Zion—even the Toronto Stake, which became the 300th stake of the Church.

Elder Christiansen, an excellent teacher, related a most significant experience from the time he was newly called as a stake president. He said, “When I was called as the president of the East Cache Stake in Logan, Utah, my counselors and I reviewed what would be the greatest need of our stake membership. At length we agreed that the principle most needed was spirituality. We appreciated the truth found in the observation: *When one deals in gen-*

eralities, he will rarely have a success; but when he deals in specifics, he will rarely have a failure. We eventually set forth a four-step plan to achieve our overall objective of increasing spirituality.”

The four-step plan of President Christiansen and his counselors was refined in an excellent fashion. Step one: “We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by every family having family prayer.” Step two: “We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by every member attending sacrament meeting weekly.” Step three: “We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by each member paying an honest tithing.” Step four: “We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by each member honoring the Sabbath day and keeping it holy.” Each was the theme for a specific period, with emphasis given regularly.

The result was that each of the specific objectives was attained. The spirituality of the stake membership literally soared.

Effort on the Ward Level

Today wards and stakes vary significantly in maturity, history, and priesthood strength. Each can improve its performance with specific effort.

I was called to serve as bishop of the Sixth-Seventh Ward in Salt Lake City in May of 1950. This ward was an amalgamation of the Sixth Ward and the Seventh Ward, which were among the original 19 wards in Salt Lake. Industrialization had decimated the number of family dwellings, which occasioned the combination. At the time I was called, the membership of the ward was a little over 1,000 members. These were comprised of perhaps 25 percent pioneer families such as mine, 25 percent transient

families, and the remaining 50 percent somewhere in between.

As a new bishopric, our first objective was to provide an assignment to each member of the ward. To help achieve this goal, we printed a small pamphlet, very brief, which related the pioneer history of the ward, the friendly nature of its membership, and the need for all to serve.

How?

First, a dignified call preceded by earnest prayer; second, an explanation concerning what was expected of the person being called; and, third, the presentation of the little pamphlet, which contained fundamentals for successful teaching, such as:

- A personality filled with religious quality.
- A genuine interest in people.
- A knowledge of the gospel.
- A wholesome attitude.
- A utilization of good teaching methods.

The pamphlet also contained "8 Points of Leadership" by Elder John A. Widtsoe, a former member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

- The mark of faith
- The mark of love
- The mark of understanding
- The mark of industry
- The mark of self-effacement
- The mark of obedience
- The mark of sincerity
- The mark of prayer¹

Explained to the newly called was the specific help which would be provided. The teacher improvement course was explained. Help from the auxiliary organization presidency was assured. The fact that the ward had a significant number of relatively transient members was not considered a deterrent at all. Rather, this provided an ideal opportunity to reach and teach more of our Heavenly Father's children. What a privilege!

Working with Youth

With regard to the Aaronic Priesthood and young women of comparable age, we simply determined that as a bishopric we would lend every effort to ensure that no boy, no girl was lost. For example, I turned to my second counselor with the plea, "Your assignment, Brother Hemingway, pertains to the deacons and those who should be deacons. Pray about it, and then, with the help of the adviser to the deacons and the deacons quorum presidency, go to work to ensure that each deacon is ready to be ordained a teacher at age 14."

I then turned to my first counselor, Brother Cox, and repeated the same direct but lovingly expressed charge to pray about it and then, with the adviser to the teachers and the teachers quorum presidency, to see to it that each teacher would be ready to be ordained a priest at age 16.

I then declared that I would do the same with regard to the priests quorum.

No effort was to be spared. Genuine love and a sense of duty were to guide our efforts.

I wish I could say that we succeeded totally, but I can declare that the result bordered on the miraculous. One example was Richard Casto, a priest.

One Sunday morning I observed that Richard was missing from the quorum meeting. I left the quorum in the care of the adviser and visited Richard's home. His mother said he was working at the West Temple Garage. I drove to the garage in search of Richard. I looked everywhere but could not find him. Suddenly I had the inspiration to gaze down into an old-fashioned grease pit situated at the side of the station. From the darkness I could see two shining eyes. Then I heard

Richard say, "You found me, Bishop! You found me. I'll come up." He rarely missed another priesthood meeting.

The family moved to a nearby stake. Time passed, and I received a phone call informing me that Richard was responding to a mission call to Mexico. I was invited to speak at the sacrament meeting prior to his leaving to the mission field.

When Richard responded, he mentioned that the turning point in his determination to fill a mission came one Sunday morning—not in the chapel, but as he gazed up from the depths of a dark grease pit and found his quorum president's outstretched hand.

Through the years I received occasional progress reports, always signed, "the boy in the grease pit," telling of his testimony, his family, and his faithful service in the Church, including his own service as a bishop.

Today Richard Casto is once again serving as a bishop.

Guidance from the Scriptures

At our ward priesthood committee meetings and our ward council meetings, we usually began with a pertinent scripture, just to focus our thinking on our duty to rescue. I recall a few of those scriptures; you are familiar with them:

From Doctrine and Covenants 64:33–34: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great. Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind."

Again, from Doctrine and Covenants 84:106: "And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also." That is the key to home teaching.

Another, from Doctrine and Covenants 76:5–6, my favorite: “I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end. Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.”

And finally, from Doctrine and Covenants 88:78, a favorite of President Packer: “Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you.”

Your Time to Serve

Brethren, this is your time to serve. Today stake presidents do not serve for 20 to 30 years, as they did at an earlier period. Bishops do not serve for 34 years, as did Bishop William Thorn of the ward where I presided. When I served as a ward clerk, I searched the Church microfilm records of that ward and learned that the First Presidency once sent Bishop Thorn an unusual letter which had this language within it:

“Dear Bishop Thorn:

“As you know, Bishop Harrison Sperry of the Fourth Ward has been called to serve a two-year mission to England. So that he will not lose his bishopric while he is so serving, we are calling you, Bishop Thorn, to look after the affairs of the Fourth Ward until Bishop Sperry returns. This, of course, will be in addition to your responsibilities as the bishop of the Seventh Ward.

“Sincerely your brethren, the First Presidency.”

Quite a number of you attending this priesthood leadership session serve on the high council of your stakes. You fill a vital role. From the *Church News* I read this account which to me was inspiring and demonstrated a classic virtue of Church government—namely, an expression of appreciation:

“At the end of the formal [disciplinary council] proceedings, the stake

president asked the members of the high council to remain for a moment longer.

“With an emotion-filled voice, the president thanked the brethren of the council for their service and devotion. It had been a long evening, and all were tired, but as the high councilors listened to their president express his love and gratitude for them the weariness departed and the spirit of their callings filled and warmed them.

“‘I don’t know what I would do without you brethren,’ the president said. ‘You are my arms and legs in carrying out the work of the Lord in this stake. I regard each of you with the same esteem I hold for my two counselors in the presidency.’”²

I commend the priesthood leadership of this Church, brethren, worldwide. When the Church calls, you serve. You serve willingly. You serve faithfully. As fathers, as husbands, as sons, as brothers, you honor the counsel given by the Apostle Paul to Timothy: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

President John Taylor provided a motivating caution to you and me when he declared, “If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty.”³

President Harold B. Lee, when speaking to priesthood leaders, said this: “When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord’s errand.”⁴ When you are on the Lord’s errand, you are entitled to the Lord’s help.

My personal plea is that all of us will strive to know what we should know, to do what we should do, and to be what we should be.

Obedying Counsel

I served as a bishop during the period of the Korean War. We had received from Church headquarters a letter, many letters. This one indicated that bishops should send a personal letter—not a form letter, a personal letter—to each serviceman every month, along with a subscription to the Church magazine, at that time the *Improvement Era*, and a subscription to the *Church News*. That took a little doing. In our large ward, we had about 18 servicemen serving. We did not have much money. Priesthood quorums, with effort, supplied funds for the subscriptions to the publications, and I took care of the letter writing to each one. From my experiences in the Navy at the end of a previous war, I knew the importance of receiving communication from home.

One day the sister who took the shorthand for those individually dictated letters said to me, “Bishop Monson, don’t you ever get discouraged?”

I said, “No, I don’t. Why?”

“Do you realize,” she explained, “that this is the 17th consecutive monthly letter you’ve sent to Lawrence Bryson, and you’ve never received a reply?”

I said, “Well, send number 17. It might do the job.” And it did. I received a reply from an APO number in San Francisco. Brother Bryson, far away in the Pacific, had written a short letter which began, “Dear Bishop, I’ve been owing you this letter for some time now.”

“I don’t know about what I’ll talk about or say. This is the first time I’ve ever written or tried writing to a bishop. How are you and your family? How is the Church? How was Christmas? I would have liked to have been there. It’s quite a change from Christmas at home to Christmas here.

"Well, Bishop, I've run out of words already. As you can see, I'm still the same backward kid you knew. But I owed you this letter, and here it is. Keep the letters coming. It's a pleasure to get them. Tell everyone hello. I'll try to drop you a few lines once in a while. Till then, I'm sincerely yours, Lawrence Bryson.

"PS. I forgot to thank you for the *Church News* and magazines. They're great."

I still have that wonderful letter written to me from Lawrence Bryson and dated "Christmas Day, December 25, 1953." It was one of the most treasured Christmas gifts ever received by me.

Yes, you sometimes wonder after 17 letters have been sent why no reply has come, but I remembered a line of truth: "The wisdom of God may appear as foolishness to men. But the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right." The leaders of the Church had spoken. We as bishops needed only to obey. The blessing was sure to follow.

We have a model to follow, brethren, in President Gordon B. Hinckley, our prophet, seer, and revelator. He is receptive to the Spirit of the Lord. He lives in such a way as to merit His direction. He asks nothing from all of us beyond that which he himself exemplifies.

I close with the words of Jesus, who declared, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20). That is our promise.

He is our Lord and Master. We are His servants. Let us so serve that we may be worthy of His divine help and approbation, I humbly pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

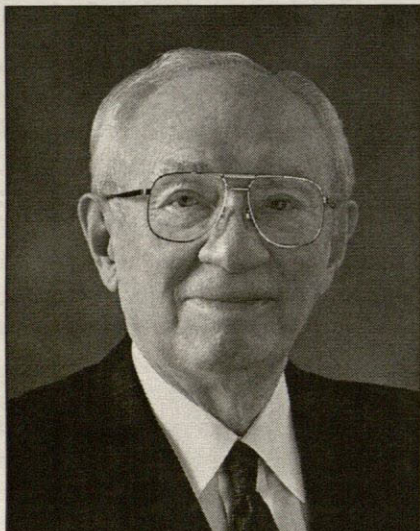
Notes

1. John A. Widtsoe, "8 Points of Leadership," *Improvement Era*, June 1939, 330-31, 378, 380.
2. "A 'Sacred Calling,'" *Church News*, 19 Feb. 1994, 16.
3. In *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
4. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.

PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve



The Miracle of It All

My dear brethren, what a pleasure and an honor and an opportunity to say a few wrap-up words. This has been a great session, and I hope that after this meeting is over, all of us who will have opportunity to have it in printed form or otherwise might take occasion to review it again and again and again. It will be profitable to do so.

While the Brethren have been speaking I have been thinking of you, my dear associates in this great work. In my mind's eye I have seen you across the world—in all the nations of Europe and to the east across

Russia and to her neighbors; in Mexico, Central America, and in all the lands of South America; in Asia, in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, India, and on down to Singapore and Indonesia; in Australia and New Zealand, and the isles of the Pacific; in Africa with all its many nations; across Canada and the United States.

I think of the miracle of it all. I think first of the miracle of the growth of the Church. The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth (see Daniel 2:34–35). I think also of the miracle of speaking to you in these circumstances. We are men of different nations and different languages, but we are all servants of the living God, leaders in His Church and kingdom. It is a glorious miracle that we are thus able to join together.

It is important that we do so. The Lord has provided the way.

We now have some 350 or 400 new stake presidents every year. We have some 4,500 new bishops each year. Other officers are constantly rotating. New leaders must be trained, and some of the mature leaders may be inclined to say, "I've heard it all before."

Well, repetition is a law of learning. No matter how long we have served, we need constant refreshing and exposure to new ideas and different faces, all designed to bring about a strengthening of the work.

As I have been listening with you, a question has arisen in my mind as I believe it has in each of yours. That question is this: "How can I find the time to do it all?"

Let me say that there is never enough time to do it all. There is so much more than any of us can single-handedly give attention to.

I think I know something of this. I have been where many of you are today. There is only one way you can get it done. That is to follow the direction which the Lord gave Joseph Smith. To him He said, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing" (D&C 88:119).

A Fourfold Responsibility

Each of us has a fourfold responsibility. First, we have a responsibility to our families. Second, we have a responsibility to our employers. Third, we have a responsibility to the Lord's work. Fourth, we have a responsibility to ourselves.

First, it is imperative that you not neglect your families. Nothing you have is more precious. Your wives and your children are deserving of the attention of their husbands and fathers. When all is said and done, it is this family relationship which we will take with us into the life beyond. To paraphrase the words of scripture, "What shall it profit a man though he serve the Church faithfully and lose his own family?" (see Mark 8:36).

Together with them, determine how much time you will spend with them and when. And then stick to it. Try not to let anything interfere. Consider it sacred. Consider it binding. Consider it an earned time of enjoyment.



Keep Monday night sacred for family home evening. Have an evening alone with your wife. Arrange some vacation time with the entire family.

Two, to your business or your employer. You have an obligation. Be honest with your employer. Do not do Church work on his time. Be loyal to him. He compensates you and expects results from you. You need employment to care for your family. Without it you cannot be an effective Church worker.

Three, to the Lord and His work. Budget your time to take care of your Church responsibilities. Recognize first that every officer has many helpers, as we have been reminded today. The stake president has two able counselors. The presidency has a high council of dedicated and able men. They have clerks as they need them. Every bishop has counselors. They are there to lift the burdens of his office from his shoulders. He has a ward council, together with others to whom he may and must delegate responsibility. He has the members of his ward, and the more he can delegate to them, the lighter will be his burden and the stronger will grow their faith.

Every priesthood quorum president has counselors, as well as the membership of the quorum. It is so with the Relief Society. No bishop can expect to fill the shoes of his Relief Society president in minister-

ing to the needs of the members of his ward.

Four, every Church leader has an obligation to himself. He must get needed rest and exercise. He needs a little recreation. He must have time to study. Every Church officer needs to read the scriptures. He needs time to ponder and meditate and think by himself. Wherever possible he needs to go with his wife to the temple as opportunity permits.

These four obligations rest upon each of us. With thoughtful consideration and careful planning, we can so budget our time as to accommodate them. We cannot, brethren, we must not neglect any one of them. The Lord does not expect us to be supermen. But if we will place ourselves in His hands, if we will plead with Him in prayer, He will inspire us and help us. He will magnify us and make us equal to the responsibility.

He has said, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10).

He has further said, "God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost" (D&C 121:26). The challenge that faces every good leader is the challenge of learning to delegate. Every stake president, every bishop, every quorum president must pass responsibility to others so that he will have the time to do that which he alone must do.

Happiness in This Work

Brethren, if you are constantly complaining that you have too much to do, then you do have too much to do. You need to get rid of some of it because a disgruntled leader becomes a poor leader.

I asked a friend who had been made a bishop how he was getting along. He said, "I am having the time

of my life. I watch others work, and they tell me how happy they are. I have the best job in the Church."

Now, of course, this man had an immense amount of work to do. There were many responsibilities which he could not give to others. But the frustration was gone. The worry was gone. He had the capacity to make assignments and to make those to whom assignments were given feel that everything depended on the way they performed. As a matter of fact, it did.

Brethren, I want to plead with you that you be happy in your work. Wear a smile on your face, and have a song in your heart as you serve the Lord.

I am an old man now. I simply do not have the energy to do what I once did. But I will not permit myself to be unhappy in doing what I can.

The demands are great. I feel a constant, unrelenting concern for what is being accomplished in the Church. I want to do better; I want to improve things. But I know that I cannot do it alone. I have two wonderful counselors, able and dedicated men. I have the Council of the Twelve. There is no better body of men on the face of the earth. I have the Seventy and the Bishopric. And I have all of you working together as one great family to assist our Father in bringing to pass His incomparable work concerning the immortality and eternal life of His children. I have the great blessing of prayer. And so does each of you. I have the opportunity to get on my knees and ask the Lord to show me the way and give me the strength and the will and the wisdom to accomplish that which He would have done.

There is no other work in all the world so fraught with happiness as is this work. That happiness is peculiar. It comes of serving others. It is real. It is unique. It is wonderful.

The Privilege to Serve

In conclusion, let me tell you of an experience recounted by L. Robert Webb when he served as a bishop. Bishop Webb said:

"I learned from my counselors at one point that an elderly sister had declined a calling in the ward. Sensing that something was amiss . . . , I made an appointment to go to her home to speak with her. When I got there, she and her husband were both present.

"After a little polite conversation I said that I understood that she had not felt comfortable in accepting a ward calling and asked what I could do to help. Both of them stared at the floor a long, long time before she answered. At last she spoke to explain that 50 years earlier, before they had been married, they had been intimate with one another and had been too ashamed to clear this up with the bishop before being married in the temple. For all of these years they had lived under the guilty burden of this transgression while paying generous tithes and offerings, . . . rearing a family in the faith, and sending children on missions.

"Though they were faithful, they were not whole. They were kept from the peace and contentment that should have been theirs in golden years by clouds of self-doubt and the tarnished memory of unresolved transgression. Outwardly they seemed secure and serene. Inwardly they were carrying a kind of damage and hurt that intruded on their spiritual confidence. Together they had suffered this awful alienation from the Lord for a long time.

"I do not know *why* their ordeal lasted a lifetime. I only know *when* it ended as the Lord lifted them from their lonely lamentations. As I tearfully listened to their story, I prayed earnestly to know what I might do to relieve them. When they finished

speaking I felt impressed to say simply: 'It is over. You have suffered long enough. I am sure the Lord has forgiven you. Repentance consists of forsaking a sin and confessing. You forsook that guilty act long, long ago. Tonight you also confessed. Now you are free. I feel certain that the Lord has forgotten your transgression and is eager to dispel your guilt with redeeming grace.'

"After kneeling in prayer together we three stood encircled in one another's arms as they sobbed out the last of their pent-up suffering and anguish.

" 'Oh, Bishop, is it really over?' they asked.

"I assured them that it was.

"The loving kindness and the grace of the Savior poured into their lives in sweet forgiving. He reached past the things that separated them from him and embraced them in sweet communion."¹

Yours, my dear brethren across the world, is the privilege of standing in the shadow of the Redeemer of the world as we carry forward this work. Yours is the opportunity to speak of the beauty of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of His sons and daughters. Could there be a greater privilege than this?

Rejoice in the privilege which is yours. Your opportunity will not last forever. Too soon there will be only the memory of the great experience you are now having.

None of us will accomplish all we might wish to. But let us do the best we can. I am satisfied that the Redeemer will then say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

God bless you, my beloved brethren. I leave you with my love for you. Each of you has a warm place in my heart. I leave my blessing upon you as my fellow servants in this great

cause and kingdom. I do it all in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Note

1. L. Robert Webb, "Vast and Intimate: The Atonement in the Heavens and in the Heart," *Brigham Young University 1998-99 Speeches* (1999), 78-79.

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