



POWER IN THE Priesthood Restored

Great blessings come through the privilege and blessing of holding and exercising the priesthood.

One evening some years ago, a companion and I were visiting with a sister in our ward. This good, faithful woman had suffered much, including divorce, poor health, and limited income. All her children except one were grown, with families of their own.

It was a difficult time for this sister. Like so many of us, in her hour of suffering she needed to feel the power of God in her life. She needed to feel that He loved her. She needed to feel that she was not alone.

I felt prompted to offer a blessing to her, and she accepted. Through the ministration of the priesthood, a choice blessing was bestowed in a sacred and humbling experience.

Words came to my mind unbidden as our Heavenly Father comforted one of His daughters. Through the blessing, she felt of His love in great measure and gained a fuller understanding of her eternal worth, as did I.

It amazed me then, as it does now, how marvelous priesthood blessings are. They

invoke the power of heaven on earth. In this and in so many other ways, priesthood power heals, comforts, guides, strengthens, and opens up the way to eternal life.

The restoration of the priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery nearly two millennia after it was taken from the earth illustrates how much trust our Heavenly Father shows in His children by granting them the privilege of having among them those who are authorized to hold His power and act in His name, thereby blessing the lives of others.

The Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

During His mortal ministry, the Savior Jesus Christ bestowed upon His Apostles the priesthood (see Matthew 10:1, 16:18–19; John 15:16), which is “the power and authority that God gives to man to act in all things necessary for the salvation of God’s children” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 8). After the Savior’s death, the Apostles and other Church leaders were persecuted, and many of them

The Joy of the Restoration

The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel, the certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, is to me past description, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior's goodness with wonder and thanksgiving while I am permitted to tarry; and in those mansions where perfection dwells and sin never comes, I hope to adore in that day which shall never cease."

Oliver Cowdery
(Joseph Smith—History 1:71, endnote)



were killed. Members of the Church began to stray from the true gospel taught by the Savior.

This eventually led to a period called "the Apostasy, or falling away from the original Church organized by the Lord" (M. Russell Ballard, "How Is It with Us?" *Ensign*, May 2000, 33). Further, "with the death of the

Apostles, priesthood keys and the presiding priesthood authority were taken from the earth" (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 35).

Priesthood keys provided the authority to govern the work of the priesthood. Without apostles, priesthood, and priesthood keys,

much of the true knowledge of God was lost and the doctrines of the gospel were distorted. No ordinances required for salvation, such as baptism, could be properly performed.

But the world would not struggle through such dark times forever. On the 15th of May, 1829, Joseph Smith sat busily translating the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery sat with him as scribe. They were living in Harmony, Pennsylvania, at the home of Joseph's in-laws, near the Susquehanna River.

When their work brought them to a passage in the Book of Mormon describing baptism, Joseph and Oliver wondered how they might receive this ordinance themselves. They desired to be clean and pure, as the ancient disciples had been, and to walk more fully in the Lord's paths.

They retired to the woods to pray in a secluded spot where they could seek private counsel of the Lord.

"While we were thus employed," recorded Joseph, "praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

"He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

"Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him [Oliver Cowdery] first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded.

"The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament" (Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72; see also D&C 13).

The Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood

Joseph Smith explained that John the Baptist "acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second" (Joseph Smith—History 1:72).

Within two weeks following John the Baptist's visit, Peter, James, and John did appear to Joseph and Oliver and did confer upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood, which was the same authority the Apostles held anciently. (See Larry C. Porter, "The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods," *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 30–47.)

While the Aaronic Priesthood provides the authority to administer the sacrament, teach the gospel, baptize, and administer the outward ordinances, the Melchizedek Priesthood provides a higher authority. Through it priesthood holders confer the gift of the Holy Ghost and confirm members of the Church, bestow blessings, heal the sick,

The Priesthood Changes Lives

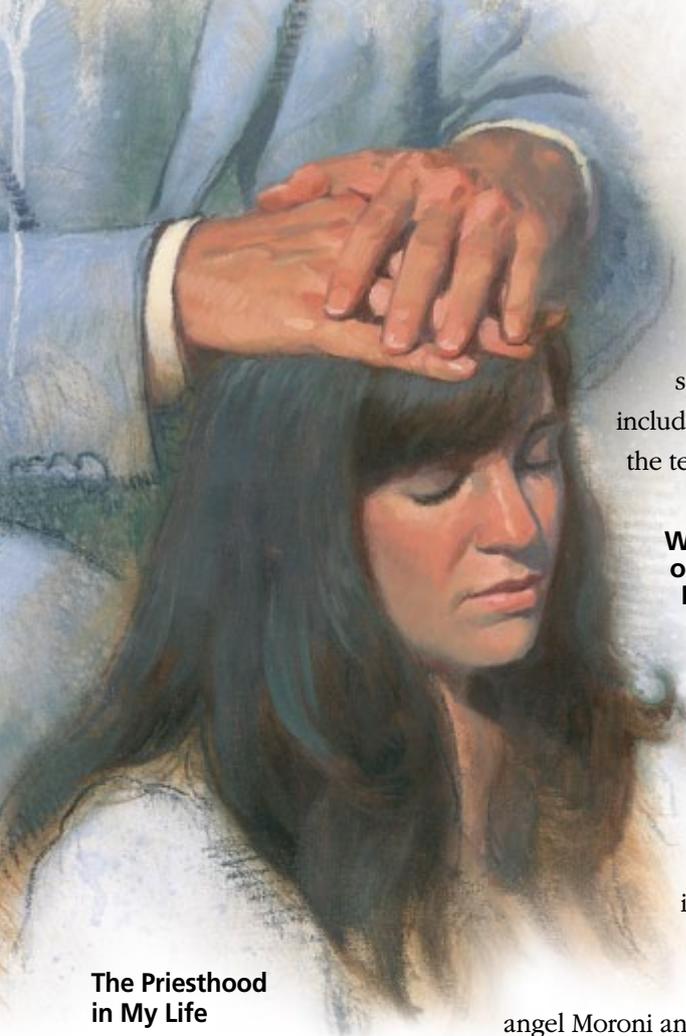
The priesthood has given me the opportunity to see others' lives change, and most importantly, my own. Anytime I have the chance to bestow a blessing, it amazes me that God would trust me to represent Him.

Striving to live up to that responsibility has made me a better person today than I was yesterday, and it will continue to help me grow and progress tomorrow and on through eternity. The amazing thing is that the ability to be able to help others blesses not only their lives, but mine as well.

In short, the gospel means everything. To think that the God of Heaven, in all His power and might, grants this is most precious.

I am forever grateful that I have this blessing in my life, and I hope that I can continue to live my life so that I can share it with others.

**Derek J. Steele,
Tempe, Arizona, USA**



The Priesthood in My Life

Having the knowledge of priesthood power has blessed my life on so many levels. I can be sealed to my husband and children forever! It has given me comfort in times of need and stress, giving me reminders of my Heavenly Father's love for me. It has healed me and guided me.

Tracey Condie,
West Jordan, Utah, USA

direct the affairs of the Church, and administer the saving ordinances, including the blessings of the temple.

What the Restoration of the Priesthood Means

To a convert such as me, the First Vision, in which God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, visited Joseph Smith, is miraculous. Likewise, the visitation of the

angel Moroni and the translation of

the Book of Mormon are remarkable.

These visitations send a powerful message. They establish the necessity of the restoration of priesthood authority and emphasize that man can receive divine authority to act in God's name for the temporal and eternal benefit of others. All our efforts to keep His commandments and enjoy salvation are fruitless without the authority of the priesthood. The Lord's work can move forward only according to His principles. His commandments can be honored only in the manner He prescribes.

The joy that comes in knowing that such blessings are available to us, that we can indeed follow the commandment to be baptized and be clean, is best described in the words of Oliver Cowdery:

"The angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! . . . We listened, we gazed, we admired!

'Twas the voice of an angel from glory, 'twas a message from the Most High! And as we heard we rejoiced, while His love enkindled upon our souls, and we were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, endnote).

The gift of holding the priesthood is a privilege given to all worthy men in the Church from our Heavenly Father. It shows immense confidence in His children and bestows the potential to bless all of them. In a recent talk during the priesthood session of general conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency explained, "The fact that our Heavenly Father would entrust this power and responsibility to man is evidence of His great love for us and a foreshadowing of our potential as sons of God in the hereafter" ("Your Potential, Your Privilege," *Ensign*, May 2011, 58).

When priesthood holders exercise faith unto repentance and call upon the name of the Lord, minister in the power of His priesthood, and strive to build His kingdom through priesthood covenants, great blessings come. In fact, the Lord has promised that "whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods . . . and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. . . . Therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto [them]" (D&C 84:33–34, 38).

All this is made possible by the grace of God through the Atonement of His Son and made available through the priesthood. That message lies at the core of the plan of happiness, provides peace to the brokenhearted, and is the great hope and joy of humanity. ■