



By Elder L. Tom Perry
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The Priesthood of Aaron

The priesthood you bear is a special gift, for the giver is the Lord Himself. Use it, magnify it, and live worthy of it.

As I spoke in general conference 25 years ago, I introduced a visual aid who stood beside me. It was my eldest grandson. He had recently received the Aaronic Priesthood and been ordained a deacon. I took the opportunity on that occasion to address my remarks to him on the importance of receiving the Aaronic Priesthood.

I said to my grandson:

"I am not overly pleased with worldly conditions that you and other young men are inheriting as you assume your role in moving toward manhood. While those of us who are older have been of an age and position to influence the world, I believe we've greatly failed you in what we have allowed the conditions in the world to become. This places you in a position where many of those with whom you must associate have not been reared with an understanding of or respect for traditional values. Thus, peer pressure becomes much more difficult and extreme.

"We have brought into our homes radios, record players, and television

sets. While each has the potential of providing wholesome entertainment, so much of what has been produced for our listening and watching pleasure is not of the caliber to inspire and encourage young men. In fact, most of what is produced is degrading. The flip of a switch right in your own home has the potential of destroying within you a sense of what is right and what is wrong" ("I Confer the Priesthood of Aaron," *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 46).

The more things change, the more they stay the same—except for technology. I'm tempted to ask the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood if they even know what a record player is. For those who don't, it's something we used to go to the family room and play so we could listen to music. Imagine that—we had to go to it instead of carrying it around with us everywhere.

I also taught my grandson Terry four lessons based on the story of Daniel in the Old Testament. I told him to (1) keep his body healthy and clean, (2) develop his mind and become wise, (3) be strong and resist

temptation in a world filled with it, and (4) trust in the Lord, especially when you need His protection.

I closed my counsel to Terry with these words: "These stories in the scriptures will never grow old. They will be just as exciting for you when you are reading them as a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a missionary, a home teacher, an elders quorum president, or whatever the Lord calls on you to do. They will teach you to have faith, courage, love for your fellowmen, confidence, and trust in the Lord" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 48).

I am happy to report that Terry has been faithful to the charge I gave him 25 years ago. He later received the Melchizedek Priesthood, served a faithful mission, currently serves as an elders quorum president, and of course is a father of a beautiful daughter.

A lot has changed in the last quarter of a century. Another thing that has happened is many of my grandchildren have grown up and had their own children. This summer I had the opportunity of standing in a circle of priesthood holders and laying my hands on the head of my eldest great-grandson as his father conferred on him the Aaronic Priesthood. Even though my great-grandson is not present to stand by my side today, I would like to address my remarks to him and all you wonderful young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood.

It is a very special blessing to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. History records the glorious day when the priesthood was restored to the earth, giving men the right to again act as God's agents as they performed the sacred priesthood ordinances. It was on April 5, 1829, that Oliver Cowdery arrived at the home of Joseph Smith in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Oliver



inquired of the Prophet about his work translating an ancient record, the Book of Mormon. Convinced of the divine nature of the work, Oliver agreed to act as scribe in completing the translation. The work of translation progressed rapidly once Oliver committed to act as scribe.

By May 15, 1829, Joseph and Oliver had already reached 3 Nephi. The history of the resurrected Savior visiting the Western Hemisphere and His teachings about baptism thrilled them. As they read in 3 Nephi, their minds started to wonder about baptism. What manner of baptism was correct, and who had authority to perform this sacred, saving ordinance? They sought an answer to these fundamental doctrinal questions. They resolved to seek an answer by prayer, and they went to a nearby place on the banks of the Susquehanna River. They poured out their hearts, and the heavens were opened to them. An angel appeared, introducing himself as John the Baptist, and he told Joseph and Oliver he was acting under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who held the higher priesthood (see Joseph Smith—History 1:72).

Placing his hands on their heads, he said: “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” (D&C 13:1).

Later, Oliver recounted the event in these words: “But . . . think, further think for a moment, what joy filled our hearts, and with what surprise we must have bowed . . . when we received under his hand the Holy Priesthood” (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote).

After mankind had been waiting for centuries for God’s authority to be restored, the power and glory of the holy Aaronic Priesthood returned to the earth. In section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we learn why the lesser priesthood is called the Aaronic Priesthood:

“The second priesthood is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his

seed, throughout all their generations.

“Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances. . . .

“The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments” (D&C 107:13–14, 20).

Not only do young men of the Aaronic Priesthood receive the power and authority to be agents of the Lord in carrying out their priesthood responsibilities, but they also receive the keys of the ministering of angels.

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, I testify to you that the Lord is bound by solemn covenant to bless your lives according to your faithfulness. If you will heed the voice of warning of the Holy Ghost and will follow His direction, you will be blessed with the ministering of angels. This blessing will add wisdom, knowledge, power, and glory to your

life. This is a sure blessing promised to you by the Lord.

A few months ago I had the opportunity of attending a ward fast and testimony meeting. One who stood to bear his testimony was an Aaronic Priesthood adviser. His testimony provided me with a new appreciation of what it means for an Aaronic Priesthood bearer to hold the keys of the ministering of angels.

This adviser described some of his experiences with the ward Aaronic Priesthood that morning. As he was walking to church he noticed two young deacons with fast-offering envelopes going to the homes of the members. He was impressed with the way they were dressed in their Sunday best and how they approached their assignment with quiet dignity. He then accompanied two priests to administer the sacrament in a residential home for physically and mentally disabled men. This was the first opportunity for these two young men to visit this home, and their adviser noted the respectful and caring way in which they approached their priesthood assignment.

Then the adviser shared a brief experience that deeply touched his heart, because one of the priests reminded him of what it really means to be a true minister of Jesus Christ—literally, a ministering angel. The young priest who was passing the water to the congregation came to a man who appeared to have Down syndrome. The man's condition prevented him from taking the cup from the tray to drink from it. This young priest immediately assessed the situation. He placed his left hand behind the man's head so he would be in a position to drink, and with the right hand he took a cup from the tray and gently and slowly lifted it to the man's lips. An expression of appreciation came to the



man's face—the expression of someone to whom someone else has ministered. This wonderful young priest then continued his assignment to pass the blessed water to the other members of the congregation.

The adviser expressed in his testimony the feelings he had at that tender moment. He said he wept silently with joy, and he knew the Church was in good hands with these young, caring, obedient bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood.

President Ezra Taft Benson once said: “Give me a young man who has kept himself morally clean and has faithfully attended his Church meetings. Give me a young man who has

magnified his priesthood and has earned the Duty to God Award and is an Eagle Scout. Give me a young man who is a seminary graduate and has a burning testimony of the Book of Mormon. Give me such a young man, and I will give you a young man who can perform miracles for the Lord in the mission field and throughout his life” (“To the ‘Youth of the Noble Birthright,’” *Ensign*, May 1986, 45).

Parents of these magnificent young men and women, we charge you with the sacred responsibility of teaching your children the doctrines of the holy priesthood. Your children must learn at an early age of the blessing of having the Lord's eternal priesthood

and what they must do individually to qualify for these blessings.

Bishops, you have the priesthood keys to preside over the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, to sit in council with them, and to teach them their priesthood duties. Please be certain each young man who is worthy to receive the Aaronic Priesthood understands the obligations and blessings which come to him as a bearer of the priesthood. Help him learn to magnify the priesthood now by giving him important assignments and by helping him serve and minister to others.

Young men, I challenge you to build your lives on a foundation of truth and righteousness. It is the only foundation that will stand the pressures of this life and endure through the eternities. The priesthood you bear is a special gift, for the giver is the Lord Himself. Use it, magnify it, and live worthy of it. I want you to know that I have a special and personal testimony of its power. It has blessed my life in so many ways.

I also challenge you to determine today that you will honor this great blessing and prepare to advance in each office of the Aaronic Priesthood—deacon, teacher, and priest. Prepare yourselves for the great blessing of receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, which you will need to be worthy to receive before you serve as a full-time missionary. The Lord needs you to prepare yourselves for His service, especially the great responsibility you will have of declaring His gospel to the world. I promise you if you will prepare to receive His holy priesthood, He will literally pour out blessings upon your heads. This witness I leave with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus the Christ, amen. ■



By Elder David A. Bednar
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Receive the Holy Ghost

These four words—“Receive the Holy Ghost”—are not a passive pronouncement; rather, they constitute a priesthood injunction—an authoritative admonition to act and not simply to be acted upon.

My message focuses on the importance of striving in our daily lives to actually receive the Holy Ghost. I pray for and invite the Spirit of the Lord to instruct and edify each of us.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

In December of 1839, while in Washington, D.C., to seek redress for the wrongs done to the Missouri Saints, Joseph Smith and Elias Higbee wrote to Hyrum Smith: “In our interview with the President [of the United States], he interrogated us wherein we differed in our religion from the other religions of the day. Brother Joseph said we differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 97).

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead; He is a personage of spirit and bears witness of all truth. In the scriptures the Holy Ghost is referred to as the Comforter (see John 14:16–27; Moroni 8:26), a teacher (see John 14:26; D&C 50:14), and a revelator (see 2 Nephi 32:5).

Revelations from the Father and the Son are conveyed through the Holy Ghost. He is the messenger for and the witness of the Father and the Son.

The Holy Ghost is manifested to men and women on the earth both as the power and as the gift of the Holy Ghost. The power can come upon a person before baptism; it is the convincing witness that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, sincere investigators can acquire a conviction of the truthfulness of the Savior’s gospel, of the Book of Mormon, of the reality of the Restoration, and of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed only after proper and authorized baptism and by the laying on of hands by those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Lord declared:

“Yea, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“And whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them” (D&C 33:11, 15).