

Honor the Priesthood and Use It Well

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My dear brethren, we are gathered across the world in the marvelous brotherhood of the holy priesthood of God. How blessed we are to be among the very few men on earth trusted to be authorized to act in the name of the Savior to bless others through the righteous use of His priesthood.

I wonder, brethren, how many of us seriously ponder the inestimable value of holding the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. When we consider how few men who have

lived on earth have received the priesthood and how Jesus Christ has empowered those individuals to act in His name, we should feel deeply humble and profoundly grateful for the priesthood we hold.

The priesthood is the authority to act in the name of God. That authority is essential to the fulfillment of His work on earth. The priesthood we hold is a delegated portion of the eternal authority of God. As we are true and faithful, our ordination to the priesthood will be eternal.

However, the conferring of authority alone does not of itself bestow the power of the office. The extent to which we can exercise the power of the priesthood depends upon personal worthiness, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to His commandments. When supported by a secure foundation of gospel knowledge, our capacity to worthily use the priesthood is greatly enhanced.

The perfect role model for use of the holy priesthood is our Savior, Jesus Christ. He ministered with love, compassion, and charity. His life was a matchless example of humility and power. The greatest blessings from the

use of the priesthood flow from humble service to others without thought of self. By following His example as a faithful, obedient priesthood bearer, we can access great power. When required, we can exercise the power of healing, of blessing, of consoling, and of counseling, as the quiet promptings of the Spirit are faithfully followed.

For a few minutes I ask you to consider that you and I are alone in a quiet place where the atmosphere permits direction by the Holy Spirit. Some of you receive periodic personal worthiness interviews, while others have callings where that seldom occurs. Will you consider that in the next few minutes you and I will have a private priesthood interview?

As we share these moments together, I ask you to ponder your personal worthiness to use the sacred authority you hold. I will also ask you to consider how consistently you use your priesthood to bless others. My intent is not to criticize but to help increase the benefits that flow from your use of the priesthood.

Are your private, personal thoughts conducive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or would they benefit from a thorough housecleaning? Do you nourish your mind with elevating material, or have you succumbed to the enticement of pornographic literature or Web sites? Do you scrupulously avoid the use of stimulants and substances that conflict with the intent of the Word of Wisdom, or have you made some personally rationalized exceptions? Are you most careful to control what enters your mind through your eyes and ears to ensure that it is wholesome and elevating?

If you are divorced, do you provide for the real financial need of the children you have fathered, not just the minimum legal requirement?

If you are married, are you faithful to your wife mentally as well as physically? Are you loyal to your marriage



covenants by never engaging in conversation with another woman that you wouldn't want your wife to overhear? Are you kind and supportive of your own wife and children? Do you assist your wife by doing some of the household chores? Do you lead out in family activities such as scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening, or does your wife fill in the gap your lack of attention leaves in the home? Do you tell her you love her?

If any of you feel uncomfortable with any of the answers you have mentally given to the questions I have asked, take corrective action now. If there are worthiness issues, with all of the tenderness of my heart I encourage you to speak to your bishop or a

member of your stake presidency now. You need help. Those matters that trouble you will not heal themselves. Without attention they will likely get worse. It may be difficult for you to speak to your priesthood leader, but I encourage you to do it now for your own good and for the benefit of those who love you.

Brethren, I now speak of how the priesthood should be used to bless the lives of others, especially the daughters of Father in Heaven.

The family proclamation states that a husband and wife should be equal partners. I feel assured that every wife in the Church would welcome that opportunity and support it. Whether it occurs or not depends upon the

husband. Many husbands practice equal partnership with their companion to the benefit of both and the blessing of their children. However, many do not. I encourage any man who is reluctant to develop an equal partnership with his wife to obey the counsel inspired by the Lord and do it. Equal partnership yields its greatest benefit when both husband and wife seek the will of the Lord in making important decisions for themselves and for their family.

Be sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit in the use of that consummate privilege of acting in the name of the Lord through your priesthood. Be more aware of how you can make greater use of the power of the priesthood in the lives of those you love and serve. I am thinking particularly of individuals such as a widow in need who likely could benefit from the help of an understanding, compassionate priesthood bearer. Many such will never request help. Be aware of the range of challenges you could help meet in her home, such as the relief of anxieties through an inspired priesthood blessing or the need for small repairs.

As a bishop, be sensitive and attentive to the sisters who serve in your ward council. They can identify the needs of the women in your ward who are not blessed with priesthood in the home. Through a home visit, the Relief Society can identify needs and recommend solutions to you. For matters beyond the scope of the Relief Society, you can call upon the elders quorum or the high priests group to provide assistance according to the need.

As a bishop, when you counsel with a husband and wife who are in marital difficulty, do you give the same credence to the statements of the woman that you do to the man? As I travel throughout the world, I find that some women are short-changed in that a priesthood leader is more persuaded by a son rather than



A father in Ukraine shares a gospel insight.

a daughter of Father in Heaven. That imbalance simply must never occur.

Do single sisters receive the consideration and attention they deserve when they attend family wards? Do they have opportunities to serve in significant callings where they are made to feel welcome and wanted? Do they receive the required priesthood support?

The purpose of priesthood authority is to give, to serve, to lift, to inspire—not to exercise unrighteous control or force. In some cultures, tradition places a man in a role to dominate, control, and regulate all family affairs. That is not the way of the Lord. In some places the wife is almost owned by her husband, as if she were another of his personal possessions. That is a cruel, unproductive, mistaken vision of marriage encouraged by Lucifer that every priesthood holder must reject. It is founded on the false premise that a man is somehow superior to a woman. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The scriptures confirm that Father in Heaven saved His greatest, most splendid, supreme creation, woman, to the end. Only after all else was completed was woman

created. Only then was the work pronounced complete and good.

Of our wives, mothers, grandmothers, and sisters and other important women in our lives, President Hinckley declared: “Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth.”¹

By divine design a woman is fundamentally different from a man in many ways.² She is compassionate and seeks the interests of others around her. However, that compassionate nature can become overwhelming for women who identify far more to accomplish than they can possibly do, even with the help of the Lord. Some become discouraged because they do not feel they are doing all they should do. I believe this is a feeling that many worthy, effective, devoted women of the Church experience.

Therefore, as a husband or son, express gratitude for what your wife and mother do for you. Express your love and gratitude often. That will make life far richer, more pleasant and purposeful for many of the daughters of Father in Heaven who seldom hear a complimentary comment and are not thanked for the multitude of things they do. As a husband, when you sense that your wife needs lifting, hold her in your arms and tell her how much you love her. May each of us ever be tender and appreciative of the special women who enrich our lives.

Often the real value of something is not recognized until it is taken from us. To illustrate, consider a man who had lost the use of the priesthood through transgression. Later it was returned to

him as part of the restoration of ordinances he obtained through full repentance. After the restoration, I turned to his wife and said, “Would you like a blessing?” She enthusiastically responded. Then I looked at the husband, now capable of using his priesthood, and said, “Would you like to give your wife a blessing?” Words cannot express the profound emotion of such an experience and the bonds of love, trust, and gratitude it created. You shouldn’t have to lose your priesthood to appreciate it more fully.

I know the immense joy and happiness that come from loving, cherishing, and respecting my precious wife with all my heart and soul. May your use of the priesthood and treatment of the important women in your life bring you the same satisfaction.

As one of the 15 Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, I express my own feelings regarding the priesthood as it has been captured perfectly by this statement of President Howard W. Hunter: “As special witnesses of our Savior, we have been given the awesome assignment to administer the affairs of his church and kingdom and to minister to his daughters and his sons wherever they are on the face of the earth. By reason of our call to testify, govern, and minister, it is required of us that despite age, infirmity, exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy, we do the work He has given us to do, to the last breath of our lives.”³

God will hold us accountable for how we treat His precious daughters. Therefore, let us treat them as He would wish to have them treated. I pray that the Lord will guide us to be more inspired, sensitive, and productive with the priesthood we hold, especially with His daughters. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
2. See Moses 4:17–19; 5:10–11.
3. Howard W. Hunter, “To the Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96.