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# *The Importance of* PRIESTHOOD BLESSINGS

*A priesthood blessing is a conferral of power over spiritual things.*

In a priesthood blessing a servant of the Lord exercises the priesthood, as moved upon by the Holy Ghost, to call upon the powers of heaven for the benefit of the person being blessed. Such blessings are conferred by holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which has the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church (see D&C 107:18, 67).

## Examples of Priesthood Blessings

There are many kinds of priesthood blessings. As I give various examples, please remember that priesthood blessings are available for all who need them, but they are given only on request.

Blessings for the healing of the sick are preceded by anointing with oil, as the scriptures direct (see James 5:14–15; Mark 6:13; D&C 24:13–14; 42:43–48; 66:9). Patriarchal blessings are conferred by an ordained patriarch.

Persons desiring guidance in an important decision can receive a

priesthood blessing. Persons who need extra spiritual power to overcome a personal challenge can receive a blessing. Priesthood blessings are often requested from fathers before children leave home for various purposes, such as school, service in the military, or a long trip.

Blessings given in circumstances such as I have just described are sometimes called blessings of comfort or counsel. They are usually given by fathers or husbands or other elders in the family. They can be recorded and kept in family records for the personal spiritual guidance of the persons blessed.

Priesthood blessings are also given in connection with a priesthood ordination or with the setting apart of a man or woman for a calling in the Church. These are probably the most frequent occasions for priesthood blessings.

Many of us have requested a priesthood blessing when we were about to embark upon a new

responsibility in our employment. I received such a blessing many years ago and felt its immediate comfort and long-term guidance.

## Significance of Priesthood Blessings

What is the significance of a priesthood blessing? Think of a young man preparing to leave home to seek his fortune in the world. If his father gave him a compass, he might use this worldly tool to help him find his way. If his father gave him money, he could use this to give him power over worldly things. A priesthood blessing is a conferral of power over spiritual things. Though it cannot be touched or weighed, it is of great significance in helping us overcome obstacles on the path to eternal life.

It is a very sacred responsibility for a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to speak for the Lord in giving a priesthood blessing. As the Lord has told us in modern revelation,



“My word . . . shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). If a servant of the Lord speaks as he is moved upon by the Holy Ghost, his words are “the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, . . . the word of the Lord, . . . [and] the voice of the Lord” (D&C 68:4).

But if the words of a blessing represent only the priesthood holder’s own desires and opinions, uninspired by the Holy Ghost, then the blessing is conditioned on whether it represents the will of the Lord.

Worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders can give blessings to their posterity. The scriptures record many such blessings, including Adam’s (see D&C 107:53–57), Isaac’s (see Genesis 27:28–29, 39–40; 28:3–4; Hebrews 11:20), Jacob’s (see Genesis 48:9–22; 49; Hebrews 11:21), and Lehi’s (see 2 Nephi 1:28–32; 4).

In modern revelation, parents who are members of the Church are

commanded to bring their children “before the church,” where the elders “are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name” (D&C 20:70). This is why parents bring babies to a sacrament meeting, where an elder—usually the father—gives them a name and a blessing.

Priesthood blessings are not limited to those blessings spoken as hands are laid on the head of one person. Blessings are sometimes pronounced on groups of people. The prophet Moses blessed all the children of Israel before his death (see Deuteronomy 33:1). The Prophet Joseph Smith “pronounced a blessing upon the sisters” working on the Kirtland Temple. He also blessed “the congregation.”<sup>1</sup>

Priesthood blessings are also pronounced on places. Nations are blessed and dedicated for the preaching of the gospel. Temples and houses of worship are dedicated to the Lord by a priesthood blessing. Other buildings may be dedicated when they are used in the service of the Lord. “Church members may dedicate their homes as sacred edifices where the Holy Spirit can reside.”<sup>2</sup> Missionaries and other priesthood holders can leave a priesthood blessing upon homes where they have been received (see Alma 10:7–11; D&C 75:19). Young men, within a short time you may be asked to give such a blessing. I hope you are preparing yourselves spiritually.



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### Experiences with Priesthood Blessings

I will mention some other examples of priesthood blessings.

About a hundred years ago, Sarah Young Vance qualified as a midwife. Before she began serving the women of Arizona, a priesthood leader blessed her that she would “always do only what was right and what was best for the welfare of her patients.” Over a period of 45 years, Sarah delivered approximately 1,500 babies without the loss of a single mother or child. “Whenever I came up against a difficult problem,” she recalled, “something always seemed to inspire me and somehow I would know what was the right thing to do.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1864, Joseph A. Young was called on a special mission to transact Church business in the East. His father, President Brigham Young,

blessed him to go and return in safety. As he was returning, he was involved in a severe train wreck. “The whole train was smashed,” he reported, “including the car I was in to within one seat of where I sat, [but] I escaped without a scratch.”<sup>4</sup>

As I speak of priesthood blessings, I have a flood of memories: I remember my sons and daughters asking for blessings to help them through the most stressful experiences of their lives. I rejoice as I recall inspired promises and the strengthened faith that came when they were fulfilled. I feel pride in the faith of a new generation when I think of a son, apprehensive about a professional examination and unable to reach his faraway father, seeking a priesthood blessing from the most accessible priesthood holder in his family, the husband of his sister. I remember a confused young convert to the Church seeking a blessing to help him change the self-destructive pattern of his life. He received a blessing so unusual I was astonished when I heard the words I spoke.

Do not hesitate to ask for a priesthood blessing when you are in need of spiritual power. **NE**

*From an April 1987 general conference address.*

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 2:399.
2. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 20.11.
3. See Leonard J. Arrington and Susan A. Madsen, *Sunbonnet Sisters: True Stories of Mormon Women and Frontier Life* (1984), 105.
4. Joseph A. Young, in *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (1974), 4.