

Episode 27

Stories from General Conference

PRIESTHOOD POWER, VOL. 2

NARRATOR: This is Stories from General Conference, volume two, on the topic of Priesthood Power. You are listening to the Mormon Channel.

Worthy young men in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have the privilege of receiving the Aaronic Priesthood. This allows them to belong to a quorum where they learn to serve and administer in some of the ordinances of the Church. In the April 1997 General Priesthood Meeting, Elder David B. Haight reminisced about his youth and how the priesthood helped him progress.

(Elder David B. Haight, Priesthood Session, April 1997)

“Those of you who are young today--and I'm thinking of the deacons who are assembled in meetings throughout the world--I remember when I was ordained a deacon by Bishop Adams. He took the place of my father when he died. My father baptized me, but he wasn't there when I received the Aaronic Priesthood. I remember the thrill that I had when I became a deacon and now held the priesthood, as they explained to me in a simple way and simple language that I had received the power to help in the organization and the moving forward of the Lord's program upon the earth. We receive that as 12-year-old boys. We go through those early ranks of the lesser priesthood--a deacon, a teacher, and then a priest--learning little by little, here a little and there a little, growing in knowledge and wisdom. That little testimony that you start out with begins to grow, and you see it magnifying and you see it building in a way that is understandable to you. You can feel the magnitude of it as you start to grow up and prepare for manhood.

Speaking of preparing for manhood, I remember when I was 12 years old. I was the head man around the house. I was a man by the time I was 12 because my mother expected that of me. She was not looked upon as a widow; she was my mother, to raise, to teach, and to train us and to help us prepare for life. And so I would say to the boys in the Aaronic Priesthood, remember the simple, simple basics that we learn from the beginning, that we're taught in the scriptures. Starting with Adam, the basics were upon the earth, and with the development of mankind, and the speed of automobiles or airplanes or communication, none of those gospel basics has changed. They're still in place. We have to be prepared as we move on through life, learning to do the things that are essential for us to advance in the priesthood or advance in positions in society or in whatever it might be, but we have to learn to obey the simple, basic rules of the gospel.”

NARRATOR: **Following is another story about the influence of the priesthood and the brotherhood a priesthood quorum can have in the lives of young men. This was a personal story related in the Priesthood session of the April 2008 General Conference by Brother Dean R. Burgess.**

(Elder Dean R. Burgess, Priesthood Session, April 2008)

As an Aaronic Priesthood young man, I can remember the excitement I felt as a newly ordained deacon. I looked forward to being able to fulfill my priesthood assignments. As a young Primary boy, I watched the deacons in my ward very closely in anticipation of the day I would be 12 years old, receive the priesthood, and be able to pass the sacrament. That day finally arrived, and soon after being ordained by my father, who was the bishop of the ward, I felt ready, but nervous, to begin my duties as a new deacon.

I now belonged to a quorum of the Aaronic Priesthood. The members of my quorum became very best friends. That friendship and quorum brotherhood continued to grow through my youth as we learned and served together in our priesthood duties. We were all good friends and experienced a fun and enjoyable time being together in our quorum activities.

One Sunday following one of those warm and long sacrament meetings, the first counselor in our bishopric called me aside to talk to me. This unscheduled priesthood interview became a blessing in my life as I have pondered the question he asked during our brief but significant visit. Brother Bateman looked me in the eye and asked, “Dean, do you know who you are?” There was complete silence, and then he gave me a quick and powerful reminder, “You are the son of Reid Burgess.”

The meaning and significance of that question has burned in my heart for a long time, and I often reflected on it throughout my teenage years. This good brother’s question—”Do you know who you are?”—has given me inspired direction throughout my life and a commitment to bring respect and honor to my family and to the priesthood.

NARRATOR: **Following is another example of how the priesthood can be a positive and uplifting influence in the lives of young men. This one is from the Priesthood session of the October 1998 General Conference given by President Gordon B. Hinckley.**

(President Gordon B. Hinckley, Priesthood Session, October 1998)

You are not "dead-end" kids. You are not wasting your lives in drifting aimlessly. You have purpose. You have design. You have plans that can only lead to growth and strength.

When your energies are harnessed, when your dreams are focused, marvelous things happen. I recently received a proclamation from a group of LDS young men from the northern area of California. They are from 19 stakes, and as they gathered in the mountains, they visited the scene of a pioneer tragedy. As the boys pondered the things they saw and the reminders of their inheritance, they were invited to sign a Mormon Trail Scout Encampment Proclamation. I should like to read this pledge to you:

"Be it known to all that we are Boy Scouts . . . and bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood of God. We pledge our allegiance to the values and principles that guided the men of the Mormon Battalion and the Latter-day Saint Pioneer men and women who helped establish this state of California. As their grateful sons, we rejoice in our heritage of service.

"On this 18th day of July 1998 we pledge to become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We will study the scriptures. We will pray for strength to obey. We will work. We will strive with all our hearts to follow the example of Jesus.

"We will magnify the priesthood we have been given by serving other people. We will keep ourselves worthy to administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Wherever there is a need for help, like our forefathers, we will step forward.

"We will prove ourselves worthy of the greater, Melchizedek Priesthood. We commit ourselves to the Lord's army and will go forth as full-time missionaries to invite all to come unto Christ.

"We are young men of the covenant. We will prepare ourselves to receive the covenant of eternal marriage. We pray for righteous wives and children whom we will honor and protect with our own lives.

"Be it known that whatever the risks, whatever the temptations, whatever the state of the world around us, as our forefathers were faithful, so we will be. Like those who have gone before, we will turn away from self-aggrandizement and set aside personal gain in order to build a peaceful society, governed by God.

"At all times and in all places, we will be true to our pledge."

I compliment every boy who signed this pledge. I pray that not one will ever default on the promises he has made to himself, to the Church, and to the Lord.

What a different world this would be if every young man could and would sign such a statement of promise. There would be no lives wasted with drugs. There would be no gangs with children killing children and young men headed either for prison or death. Education would become a prize worth working for. Service in the Church would become an opportunity to be cherished. There would be greater peace and love in the homes of the people. There would be no viewing of pornography, no reading of sleazy literature. You would honor and respect the girls with whom you associate, and they would never have any fear about being alone with you in any set of circumstances. It would be as if the stripling warriors of Helaman had recruited the youth of the world to their way of living.

NARRATOR:

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In the following address, given in the Priesthood session of the April 2000 General Conference, Elder Richard G. Scott called upon the young men of the Church to be a positive example to young women.

(Elder Richard G. Scott, Priesthood Session, April 2000)

So many of our sisters are disheartened, even discouraged, and disillusioned. Others are in serious trouble because of the choices they make. Satan has unleashed a seductive campaign to undermine the sanctity of womanhood, to deceive the daughters of God and divert them from their divine destiny. He well knows women are the compassionate, self-sacrificing, loving power that binds together the human family. He would focus their interests solely on their physical attributes and rob them of their exalting roles as wives and mothers. He has convinced many of the lie that they are third-class citizens in the kingdom of God. That falsehood has led some to trade their divinely given femininity for male coarseness.

The growing success of Lucifer's efforts was emblazoned on my mind when in Salt Lake City I turned my car in front of a pickup truck loaded with attractive young women. Their vehicle then swerved in front of me, cutting dangerously close. The girls vented their displeasure with multiple vulgar comments and obscene gestures. They were dressed predominantly in male attire, yet some had immodest clothing that left little to the imagination. My heart sank. These are daughters of God. I resolved that if I ever had the chance, I would enlist the righteous priesthood of God to help such misguided young women. Brethren, we can and must help them. I fear that much of their plight comes from our own neglect or misdeeds. As a priesthood husband, father, son, or brother, each of us absolutely must help each daughter of God we can to realize what sacred characteristics Father in Heaven has given her. Many are being cheated of the rich, full life and the blessings God would have them receive. Will you help them understand what they are sacrificing as they are led as innocent, blind sheep by those who, for personal gain and self-justification, would rob them of their priceless womanhood? Because it is their nature to give and please others, many women do not realize their intrinsic worth. That loss makes them vulnerable to those who would convince them that their major role is to be physically appealing.

So many of our own young women sacrifice their God-given endowment of femininity, deep spirituality, and a caring interest in others on the altar of popular, worldly opinion. Young men, let such young women know that you will not seek an eternal companion from those that are overcome by worldly trends. Many dress and act immodestly because they are told that is what you want. In sensitive ways, communicate how distasteful revealing attire is to you, a worthy young man, and how it stimulates unwanted emotions from what you see against your will.

NARRATOR: **Priesthood quorums not only allow continuing opportunities of service for the youth, but they lay a foundation of service that continues throughout one's entire life. In the Priesthood session of the October 1998 General Conference, President James E. Faust related a story from the life of Hugh B. Brown that illustrates such service and how it equalized status created by the world.**

(President James E. Faust, Priesthood Session, October 1998)

Before President Hugh B. Brown was a General Authority, he served in England as an officer in the Canadian army and had great power. Men stood at attention before him and called him "sir." One day Brother Brown received a message that he was wanted in the hospital. When he got there, someone directed him to a little room where a sick young man lay. Brother Brown remembered that he had once been that young man's Sunday School teacher. "Brother Brown," said the young man, "would you use your authority in my behalf? The doctors say I cannot live. Will you give me a blessing?" All the pride Brother Brown felt in wearing the uniform of the king disappeared as he laid his hands upon the boy's head and gave him a blessing. The help that the boy needed was not from any authority of an officer in the king's army but from the authority of the priesthood.

NARRATOR: **One can encounter situations to perform priesthood service unexpectedly. Being ready and worthy to serve at all times allows both giver and receiver to benefit in different ways. This principle was illustrated by President Thomas S. Monson during the Priesthood Session of the April 2009 General Conference.**

(President Thomas S. Monson, Priesthood Session, April 2009)

Some 900 miles (1,400 km) north of Salt Lake City is the beautiful city of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, home of the famous Calgary Stampede, one of Canada's largest annual events and the world's largest outdoor rodeo. The 10-day event features a rodeo competition, exhibits, agricultural competitions, and chuck wagon races. The Stampede Parade, which occurs on opening day, is one of the festival's oldest and largest traditions. The parade follows a nearly three-mile (5-km) route in downtown Calgary, with attendance reaching 350,000 spectators, many dressed in western attire.

Several years ago, a marching band from a large high school in Utah had auditioned for and had received one of the coveted entries to march in the Calgary Stampede Parade. Months of fund-raising, early-morning practices up and down the streets, and other preparations were undertaken in order for the band to travel to Calgary and participate in the parade, where one band would be selected to receive the first-place honor.

Finally the day for departure arrived, with the eager students and their leaders boarding the buses and heading north for the long journey to Calgary.

While en route, the caravan stopped in Cardston, Alberta, Canada, where the group remained for an overnight stay. The local Relief Society sisters there prepared sack lunches for the band members to enjoy before departing again. Brad, one of the band members, who was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, was not hungry and decided to keep his lunch until later.

Brad liked to sit in the back of the bus. As he took his usual seat there in preparation for the remainder of the journey to Calgary, he tossed his sack lunch on the shelf behind the last row of seats. There the lunch sat by the rear window as the July afternoon sun shone through. Unfortunately, the sack lunch contained an egg salad sandwich. For those of you who don't understand the significance of this, may I just say that egg salad must be refrigerated. If it is not, and if it is subjected to high heat such as that which would be produced by the sun beating through a bus window on a sunny day, it becomes a rather efficient incubator for various strains of bacteria that can result in what may commonly be referred to as food poisoning.

Sometime before arriving in Calgary, Brad grew hungry. Remembering the sack lunch, he gulped down the egg salad sandwich. As the buses arrived in Calgary and drove around the city, the members of the band grew excited—all except for Brad. Unfortunately, all that grew within him were severe stomach pains and other discomforts associated with food poisoning. You know what they are.

Upon arriving at their destination, the band members exited the bus. Brad, however, did not. Although he knew his fellow band members were counting on him to play his drum in the parade the following morning, Brad was doubled over in pain and was too sick to leave the bus. Providentially for him, two of his friends, Steve and Mike, who had recently graduated from high school and who had also recently been ordained to the office of elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, found that Brad was missing and decided to look for him.

Finding Brad in the rear of the bus and learning what the problem was, Steve and Mike felt helpless. Finally it occurred to them that they were elders and held the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood to bless the sick. Despite their total lack of experience in giving a priesthood blessing, these two new elders had faith in the power they held. They laid their hands on Brad's head and, invoking the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ uttered the simple words to bless Brad to be made well.

From that moment, Brad's symptoms were completely gone. The next morning he took his place with the rest of the band members and proudly marched down the streets of Calgary. The band received first-place honors and the coveted blue ribbon. Far more important, however, was that two young, inexperienced but worthy priesthood holders had answered the call to represent the Lord in serving their fellow man. When it was necessary for them to exercise their priesthood in behalf of one who was desperately in need of their help, they were able to respond because they lived their lives righteously.

NARRATOR:

Our final story in this series is also from President Thomas S. Monson related during the April 2009 General Conference. From a personal experience, President Monson illustrated the privilege of performing priesthood service and the attitude and humility of the man receiving the blessing.

(President Thomas S. Monson, Sunday Morning Session, April 2009)

Late one evening on a Pacific isle, a small boat slipped silently to its berth at the crude pier. Two Polynesian women helped Meli Mulipola from the boat and guided him to the well-worn pathway leading to the village road. The women marveled at the bright stars, which twinkled in the midnight sky. The moonlight guided them along their way. However, Meli Mulipola could not appreciate these delights of nature—the moon, the stars, the sky—for he was blind.

Brother Mulipola’s vision had been normal until a fateful day when, while working on a pineapple plantation, light turned suddenly to darkness and day became perpetual night. He was depressed and despondent until he learned the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His life was brought into compliance with the teachings of the Church, and he once again felt hope and joy.

Brother Mulipola and his loved ones had made a long voyage, having learned that one who held the priesthood of God was visiting among the islands of the Pacific. He sought a blessing, and it was my privilege, along with another who held the Melchizedek Priesthood, to provide that blessing to him. As we finished, I noted that tears were streaming from his sightless eyes, coursing down his brown cheeks and tumbling finally upon his native dress. He dropped to his knees and prayed: “O God, Thou knowest I am blind. Thy servants have blessed me that my sight might return. Whether in Thy wisdom I see light or whether I see darkness all the days of my life, I will be eternally grateful for the truth of Thy gospel, which I now see and which provides the light of my life.”

He rose to his feet and, smiling, thanked us for providing the blessing. He then disappeared into the still of the night. Silently he came; silently he departed. But his presence I shall never forget. I reflected upon the message of the Master: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

NARRATOR:

Priesthood power is given for use in the service of others. By being worthy and prepared to use this privilege, the lives of others can be blessed and uplifted. Participation in a priesthood quorum provides both encouragement to serve and a feeling of brotherhood with others. May we all find both opportunities and joy in our service to others.

Thank you for joining us on the Mormon Channel. This has been “Stories from General Conference” on the topic of Priesthood Power, Volume 2. For more information on the Mormon Channel, go to radio.lds.org.