

LESSON 47
“To Keep Them in the Right Way”
Moroni 1-6

OVERVIEW:

Having survived the destruction of the Nephites, Moroni continues his writings. Moroni teaches about essential gospel ordinances. Moroni explains the requirements for Church membership and the need for record keeping and fellowshipping.

This final book in the Book of Mormon was written by Moroni after his father's death and some fifteen to thirty-five years after the battle at Cumorah.

Moroni pondered about what he could add to the records that would be of further value to those who would one day receive his writings, and especially, as he said, to his brethren, the Lamanites." The writings in the book of Moroni serve almost like an appendix to the Book of Mormon. Moroni included in it some items of practical instruction, a sermon and some epistles from his father, and his own final, powerful testimony and farewell. We do not know how he then finished his sojourn on earth, but we know from subsequent events in the earliest days of this last dispensation of the gospel that he did indeed triumph as he predicted. DCBM, 4:319.

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF MORONI
CHAPTER 1

Moroni writes for the benefit of the Lamanites—The Nephites who will not deny Christ are put to death. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

1 NOW I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed ^anot to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me.

2 For behold, their ^awars are exceedingly fierce among themselves; and because of their ^bhatred they ^cput to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ.

3 And I, Moroni, will not ^adeny the Christ; wherefore, I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life.

4 Wherefore, I write a few more things, contrary to that which I had supposed; for I had supposed not to have written any more; but I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of ^aworth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, (In spite of the fact that the Lamanites will kill Moroni, he has such love and compassion for them that he is determined to finish the record that will one day come unto them.) in some future day, according to the will of the Lord. (Moroni tells us that he had not previously planned to write more on the plates after completing his abridgment of the book of Ether. Perhaps as he wandered and hid from the Lamanites who sought his destruction additional thoughts came to his mind that impressed him to add a few more items to the record. Certainly he did not view these additions as nothing more than "fillers." Recording things on the plates was not an easy or convenient thing. It required considerable effort and time. Thus we must assume that Moroni felt strongly that the things he was now to include were of special significance- particularly to his brethren the Lamanites of the last days. DCBM, 4:321)

CHAPTER 2

Jesus gave the Nephite apostles power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

1 THE words of Christ, which he spake unto his ^adisciples, (Apostles) (Elder Joseph Fielding Smith added: "While in every instance the Nephite twelve are spoken of as disciples, the fact remains that they had been endowed with divine authority to be special witnesses for Christ among their own people. Therefore, they were virtually apostles to the Nephite race, although their jurisdiction was, as revealed to Nephi, eventually to be subject to the authority and jurisdiction of Peter and the twelve chosen in Palestine." Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:122. Joseph Smith: This book [the Book of Mormon] also tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this continent after His resurrection; that He planted the Gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists; the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers, and blessings, as were enjoyed on the eastern continent. (Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 Vols. 4:538)) the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them—

2 And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall ^acall on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have ^bpower that to him upon whom ye shall lay your ^chands, ^dye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles.

3 Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and the multitude heard it not, but the disciples heard it; and on as many as they ^alaid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost. (When he spoke to his disciples, Christ probably taught them the words to the prayers and the method of ordaining people to the priesthood. Moroni has included those instructions in these chapters, the appendix to the Book of Mormon. God is the same yesterday today, and forever. Whenever there has been priesthood, keys, and servants of the Lord authorized to proclaim the everlasting gospel and administer in its ordinances, there also has been the Church- the earthly kingdom of God. Perhaps Moroni, in writing to his latter-day readers, is showing that the foundational principles upon which the Nephite Church was built are the same today and in all generations. These verses also testify that the Nephite Church organized by the Savior himself operated under the power and authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is by this higher priesthood that the gift of the Holy Ghost can be conferred upon people who have entered the Church through proper baptism. In discussing the practices and principles that governed the Nephite Church, there is probably good reason why Moroni first records the disciples being empowered to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost and its accompanying gifts are imperative to the operation of the priesthood and the work of the Church. "We believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost being enjoyed now, as much as it was in the Apostles' days," the Prophet Joseph declared. "We believe that it [the gift of the Holy Ghost] is necessary to make and to organize the Priesthood, that no man can be called to fill any office in the ministry without it; we also believe in prophecy, in tongues, in visions, and in revelations, in gifts, and in healings; and that these things cannot be enjoyed without the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Teachings, p. 243.) DCBM, 4:323)

CHAPTER 3

Elders ordain priests and teachers by the laying on of hands. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

1 THE manner which the disciples, who were called the ^aelders of the church, ^bordained ^cpriests and teachers— (See the end of the lesson for instructions on how ordinances are performed in our day.)

2 After they had prayed unto the Father in the name of Christ, they ^alaid their hands upon them, and said:

3 In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a priest, (or, if he be a ^ateacher) I ordain you to be a

teacher, to preach repentance and ^bremission of sins through Jesus Christ, by the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen.

4 And after this manner did they ^aordain priests and teachers (In earlier Nephite times priests and teachers were called and ordained to service in the kingdom. These priests and teachers were not officers in the Aaronic Priesthood as we know it today. They were priests and teachers in the general sense that they were Melchizedek Priesthood servants who ministered to the people and taught the gospel (see 2 Nephi 5:26 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did ^aconsecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be ^bpriests and ^cteachers over the land of my people.; Jacob 1:18; For I, Jacob, and my brother Joseph had been ^aconsecrated priests and ^bteachers of this people, by the hand of Nephi. Mosiah 18:18 And it came to pass that Alma, having ^aauthority from God, ^bordained priests; even one priest to every fifty of their number did he ordain to preach unto them, and to ^cteach them concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. It is not explicit in Moroni's account whether he is referring to "priests and teachers" in a generic way, meaning those who would minister under the Melchizedek Priesthood, or to the literal offices of priest and teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: "There were no Levites who accompanied Lehi to the Western Hemisphere. Under these conditions the Nephites officiated by virtue of the Melchizedek Priesthood from the days of Lehi to the days of the appearance of our Savior among them. It is true that Nephi 'consecrated Jacob and Joseph' that they should be priests and teachers over the land of the Nephites, but the fact that the plural terms priests and teachers were used indicates that this was not a reference to the definite office in the priesthood in either case, but it was a general assignment to teach, direct, and admonish the people. Otherwise the terms priest and teacher would have been given, in the singular When the Savior came to the Nephites, he established the Church in its fulness among them, and he informed them that former things had passed away, for they were all fulfilled in him. He gave the Nephites all the authority of the priesthood which we exercise today. Therefore we are justified in the belief that not only was the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred, but also the Aaronic, just as we have it in the Church today; and this Aaronic Priesthood remained with them from this time until, through wickedness, all priesthood ceased. We may be assured that in the days of Moroni the Nephites did ordain teachers and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood; but before the visit of the Savior they officiated in the Melchizedek Priesthood." (Answers to Gospel Questions 1:124, 126.) DCBM, 4:323-24), according to the ^bgifts and callings of God unto men; and they ordained them by the ^cpower of the Holy Ghost, which was in them. (The Nephite disciples, who were ordained by Jesus (3 Nephi 12:1 ^aAND it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to ^bbaptize, was ^ctwelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: ^dBlessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have ^echosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.), called others to priesthood service in the Church. This priesthood practice parallels that which was revealed by the Lord to Joseph Smith in this dispensation (D&C 20:38-56: 38 *The ^aduty of the elders, priests, teachers, deacons, and members of the church of Christ—An ^bapostle is an ^celder, and it is his calling to ^dbaptize; 39 And to ^aordain other elders, priests, teachers, and deacons; 40 And to administer ^abread and wine—the ^bemblems of the flesh and blood of Christ— 41 And to ^aconfirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of ^bhands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures; 42 And to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church; 43 And to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands, and the giving of the Holy Ghost; 44 And to take the ^alead of all meetings. 45 The elders are to ^aconduct the ^bmeetings as they are ^cled by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God. 46 The ^apriest's duty is to preach, ^bteach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament, 47 And visit the house of each member, and exhort them to*

^apray ^bvocally and in secret and attend to all ^cfamily duties. 48 And he may also ^aordain other priests, teachers, and deacons. 49 And he is to take the ^alead of meetings when there is no elder present; 50 But when there is an elder present, he is only to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, 51 And visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties. 52 In all these duties the priest is to ^aassist the elder if occasion requires. 53 The ^ateacher's duty is to ^bwatch over the ^cchurch always, and be with and strengthen them; 54 And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither ^ahardness with each other, neither lying, ^bbackbiting, nor ^cevil ^dspeaking; 55 And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty. 56 And he is to take the lead of meetings in the absence of the elder or priest—). The Book of Mormon thereby stands not only as another witness of Christ but also as another witness of the "true and living Church" of Christ. (DCBM, 4:323)

CHAPTER 4

How the elders and priests administer the sacramental bread. [Between A.D. 400 and 421] (During the resurrected Savior's ministry among the Nephites he introduced to them the ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and taught them the significance of it (see 3 Nephi 18 and the corresponding commentary). In these chapters Moroni is illuminating this doctrine and ordinance, not by further doctrinal teaching of the symbolism or its significance but rather by demonstrating that it was a formal ordinance that was practiced in the Nephite Church. Moroni gives us the exact words of the prescribed prayer that must be offered as a part of this essential ordinance because the sacrament is not merely a ritual of remembrance but is in very deed a solemn covenant. The specific words and phrases of the sacramental prayer are a critical part of that covenant. Perhaps Moroni realized that in his father's abridgment the doctrine of the sacrament was taught and discussed but the words of the covenantal prayers had not been included; and that they should be in order that the latter-day reader of the Book of Mormon would better understand the significant covenants and blessings associated with the sacrament. (DCBM, 4: 325)

1 THE ^amanner of their ^belders and ^cpriests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it ^daccording to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it—

2 And they did kneel down with the ^achurch, and pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying:

3 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and ^asanctify this ^bbread to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in ^cremembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness (It is clear from the Book of Mormon usage of the verb "to witness" as it relates to baptism (see Mosiah 18:10: Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being ^abaptized in the ^bname of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a ^ccovenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?) and the sacrament (see 3 Nephi 18:11 And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in ^aremembrance of my ^bblood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.) that it means to enter into a solemn covenant. Another way this phrase could read is "and covenant with thee." Only when we understand that as we "witness" we are covenanting with the Father to do certain things does the ordinance of the sacrament truly become a renewal of our previous covenants taken at baptism. (DCBM, 4:325) unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the ^dname of thy Son (The name of Christ comes upon us not merely for the asking but only as we exercise faith in him, keep his commandments, and partake of the ordinances of salvation. When we covenant to take the name of Christ we are in fact covenanting with the Lord that we will so live our lives that we can be spiritually "born of him" and "become his sons and his daughters" (see Mosiah 5:7-12 Mosiah 15:11-12; Mosiah 27:25; D&C 34:2-3;

D&C 39:4). Those who have thus been born again become members of the family of Christ and thus take upon them the family name- they become Christians in the true sense of that word and are obligated by covenant to live by the rules and regulations of the royal family, to live a life befitting the new and sacred name they have taken. "Family members bear the family name," wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie. "By it they are known and called and identified; it sets them apart from all those of a different lineage and ancestry. Adopted children take upon themselves the name of their newfound parents and become in all respects as though they had been born in the family. And so it is that the children of Christ, those who are born again, those who are spiritually begotten by their new Father, take upon themselves the name of Christ. By it they are known; in it they are called; it identifies and sets them apart from all others. They are now family members, Christians in the real and true sense of the word. "Do they themselves become Christs? Not in the sense that they are called upon to atone for the sins of others and make immortality and eternal life available for themselves or their fellowmen on this or any world. But they do carry his name and are obligated to bear it in decency and dignity.' (Promised Messiah, p. 363.) DCBM, 4:326), and always remember him When we covenant to "always remember him' we are not only committing ourselves to reflect and ponder upon the mission and teachings of the Lord but also are binding ourselves to follow the teachings of the Master and to seek diligently to walk in his footsteps, to live our lives and to treat our fellowman as we remember the Savior to have done. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has declared that if we are to remember Jesus we must also follow him. He cited several specific ways by which we demonstrate our remembrance of the Savior: "He calls us to take time from our daily activities to follow him and serve our fellowman. Even the greatest among us should be the servant of all. Those who always remember him will straightway assume and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities to which they are called by his servants If we always remember our Savior, we will forgive and forget grievances against those who have wronged us As we always remember him, we should strive to assure that we and our family members and, indeed, all the sons and daughters of God everywhere follow our Savior into the waters of baptism. This reminds each of us of our duties to proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead We should always remember how the Savior taught us to love and do good to one another. Loving and serving one another can solve so many problems!" (Ensign, May 1988, pp. 30-31). DCBM, 4:326-327), and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. (One's faithfulness to the covenants made in baptism and renewed with worthy partaking of the sacrament binds the Lord to his part of the covenant agreement. He has promised that we may have the influence of the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. There are many significant spiritual fruits that come to us as the Lord fulfills this promise to us. The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier, and as a result we are forgiven of our sins and cleansed by the Holy Spirit through worthy partaking of the sacrament. "If we have done wrong; if there is a feeling in our souls that we would like to be forgiven," Elder Melvin J. Ballard declared, "then the method to obtain forgiveness is not through rebaptism; it is not to make confession to man; but it is to repent of our sins, to go to those against whom we have sinned or transgressed and obtain their forgiveness, and then repair to the sacrament table where, if we have sincerely repented and put ourselves in proper condition, we shall be forgiven, and spiritual healing will come to our souls. It will really enter into our being." (Improvement Era, October 1919, pp. 1026-27.) In addition to the cleansing from sin and the spiritual healing that comes by the Holy Ghost, having the Spirit with us yields other great blessings. If we are true to our covenants, the Spirit helps us to speak with power (see D&C 88:137), brings things to our remembrance (see John 14:26), gives us peace and joy (see Galatians 5:22), teaches and testifies of eternal truths (see John 14:26; Moroni 10:5), opens up revelations to our minds (see Alma 5:46), shows us all things that we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5), strengthens body, mind and spirit (see Romans 8:26), comforts us in times of sorrow (see Acts 9:31), unfolds to us the mysteries of the kingdom (see 1 Nephi 10:19), and brings us many other spiritual blessings. Mortal minds cannot fully comprehend and words cannot fully explain what great things can come to us if we partake worthily of the sacrament and merit the Lord's promise to have his Spirit with us always. DCBM, 4:327) Amen.

CHAPTER 5

The mode of administering the sacramental wine is set forth. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

1 THE ^amanner of administering the wine—Behold, they took the cup, and said:

2 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this ^awine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in ^bremembrance of the ^cblood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his ^dSpirit to be with them. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Repentant persons are baptized and fellowshipped—Church members who repent are forgiven—Meetings are conducted by the power of the Holy Ghost. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

1 AND now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and they were not baptized save they brought forth ^afruit meet that they were ^bworthy of it. (The "fruit" of faith and repentance includes not only a willingness to be baptized but also a life that demonstrates that desire and reflects a love for the Savior and for his teachings. Thus an interview is an essential part of preparation for baptism. Repentance and sincere commitment to gospel principles are the indicators of spiritual readiness for the covenant of baptism (see Matthew 3:8; Alma 13:10-13). DCBM, 4:328-29)

2 Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a ^abroken ^bheart and a contrite spirit, ("To have a broken heart and contrite spirit," wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "is to be broken down with deep sorrow for sin, to be humbly and thoroughly penitent, to have attained sincere and purposeful repentance" (Mormon Doctrine, p. 161). This kind of humility is not just sorrow for sin but is also an attitude of gratitude for the Savior's sacrifice and a recognition of one's total and complete dependence upon his merits and mercy. DCBM, 4: 329) and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

3 And none were received unto baptism save they ^atook upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end. (Moroni's description of the qualifications for baptism into the Nephite Church of Christ shows virtually the same conditions as those listed by the Lord through revelation in this dispensation (compare D&C 20:37). Worthiness to be admitted into the kingdom of God on earth is not open to negotiation. These conditions are prescribed by the Lord and are the same from one dispensation to another. DCBM, 4:328)

4 And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and ^acleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, (Confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost) they were numbered among the people of the ^bchurch of Christ; and their ^cnames were taken, that they might be remembered (This perhaps has reference to the Nephite Church's equivalent of our modern-day membership record system. Keeping a record of the members of the Church was not done for the sake of reporting statistics or "boasting" in numbers but rather so that each member could be identified and remembered. The purpose is the same today. Members are remembered in that priesthood leaders are kept aware of all those in their units in order that, through priesthood quorums and auxiliaries and through effective home teaching, the Saints can be spiritually ministered to and encouraged to live the gospel to be mindful of the need for prayer, and to more faithfully rely upon the merciful arm of the Savior. We do not know exactly what procedures and/or programs were employed by the Nephite Church to meet these objectives, but we can clearly see that the responsibilities of fellowshipping and nurturing one another, of being our "brother's keeper," is an age-old requirement of all of the Lord's Saints. (Compare D&C 20:42, 46-55). DCBM, 4:329) and nourished by the good word of God, (President Gordon B. Hinckley: every new convert needs three things: 1. A friend in the Church to whom he can constantly turn, who

will walk beside him, who will answer his questions, who will understand his problems. 2. An assignment. Activity is the genius of this Church. It is the process by which we grow. Faith and love for the Lord are like the muscle of my arm. If I use them, they grow stronger. If I put them in a sling, they become weaker. Every convert deserves a responsibility. The bishop may feel that he is not qualified for responsibility. Take a chance on him. Think of the risk the Lord took when He called you. Of course the new convert will not know everything. He likely will make some mistakes. So what? We all make mistakes. The important thing is the growth that will come of activity. As a part of this process of giving responsibility, it is proper and very important that the new convert, if he be a man, is ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood. Then before too many months, he may be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. He will have the fellowship of the elders quorum. He will become one of a vast body of priesthood throughout the world, men of integrity and faith who love the Lord and seek to move forward His work. 3. Every convert must be "nourished by the good word of God" (**Moro. 6:4**). It is imperative that he or she become affiliated with a priesthood quorum or the Relief Society, the Young Women, the Young Men, the Sunday School, or the Primary. He or she must be encouraged to come to sacrament meeting to partake of the sacrament, to renew the covenants made at the time of baptism. I am convinced that we will lose but very, very few of those who come into the Church if we take better care of them. Ensign, May 1999, 108-109.) to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually ^dwatchful unto prayer, ^erelying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith. (God the Father is the author of the plan of salvation. Jesus, by divine investiture of authority and as the chief proponent of the Father's plan, is also often referred to as the author of our faith. In some translations of the Bible this term author is translated as captain. Our Savior is indeed the captain of our salvation and the prime mover of our faith and the source of all righteousness. Another word for author is father. Jesus is truly the father or author of the salvation of all who come unto him and are "born again" and thus become his children. Christ is the finisher of our faith in that, through our faith in him, he perfects our faith and perfects us. Through his grace we are saved or, in other words, spiritually finished as to immortality and eternal life. It is upon Christ and his infinite atonement that we should focus our hearts, minds, and strength. He is indeed the light at the "end of the tunnel" — it is he that the scriptures command us to consider as "the end of your salvation" (D&C 46:7). DCBM, 4:330)

5 And the ^achurch did meet together ^boft, (The value of Church meetings is not in their frequency but rather in that coming together often in the spirit of fasting and prayer helps feed the spirit and keep one close to gospel principles. Just as it is unhealthy and physically dangerous to neglect one's health and nutrition, so is it spiritually life-threatening to go without the spiritual nutrition that comes from meeting together, serving one another, and being taught. Partaking of the sacrament weekly is also an imperative ingredient in a spiritual "balanced diet." President Anthon H. Lund declared: "unless the Saints attend their meetings it will be hard for them to keep alive in the Gospel" (CR, October 1907, p. 9) DCBM, 4:330) to ^cfast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

6 And they did ^ameet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in ^bremembrance of the Lord Jesus. ("No man goes away from this Church and becomes an apostate in a week, nor in a month," observed Elder Melvin J. Ballard. "It is a slow process. The one thing that would make for the safety of every man and woman would be to appear at the sacrament table every Sabbath day. We would not get very far away in one week- not so far away that, by the process of self-investigation, we could not rectify the wrongs we may have done. If we should refrain from partaking of the sacrament, condemned by ourselves as unworthy to receive these emblems, we could not endure long, and we would soon, I am sure, have the spirit of repentance. The road to the sacrament table is the path of safety for the Latter-day Saints." (Improvement Era, October 1919, p. 1028.) DCBM, 4:330-31)

7 And they were strict to observe that there should be ^ano iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and ^bthree witnesses of the church did condemn them before the ^celders, and if they repented not, and ^dconfessed not, their names were ^eblotted out, and they were not ^fnumbered among the people of Christ.

8 But ^aas oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real ^bintent, they were ^cforgiven. (Church discipline too is an important element of the perfection-of-the-saints mission of the Church. Rooting out iniquity from the institutional Church has always been one of the responsibilities of the 'elders' in all dispensations, but there is a more important blessing to the individual that comes from such discipline. The Nephites, like the modern Church, sought not only to preserve the spiritual integrity of the institution but also to help each member repent and walk uprightly before the Lord (see D&C 20:80; D&C 42:80-83; D&C 102:12-23). Those who misunderstand the mission of the Church and the indispensable role of discipline in fulfilling that mission may view excommunication, disfellowshipment, or other formal disciplinary measures as unfairly punitive and humiliating. On the contrary, Elder Theodore M. Burton noted that "the most loving action the Church can take at times is to disfellowship or excommunicate a person" ("To Forgive Is Divine," Ensign, May 1983, p. 70). When deemed necessary through inspiration these repentance remedies can help the sinner fully realize the seriousness of his transgression. If a serious offense is treated too lightly it is more likely to be repeated. Such Church actions can ensure that the necessary price for repentance is paid. They also serve to mercifully protect the errant person from the full weight and responsibility of his covenants, which if left in full force would bring condemnation upon him in his yet unforgiven state. Through Church discipline a wrongdoer can demonstrate to the Lord, to the Church, and to others a sincere desire to repent and be forgiven, whatever the cost. This period of discipline is an opportunity to be retained as a disciple of him who made our repentance possible. If such discipline does not yield repentance, reformation, and forgiveness for the sinner, such discipline still protects the sanctity and purity of the Church. To do otherwise is an offense to God, for he declared: "And him that repenteth not of his sins, and confesseth them not, ye shall bring before the church, and do with him as the scripture saith unto you, either by commandment or by revelation. And this ye shall do that God may be glorified- not because ye forgive not, having not compassion, but that ye may be justified in the eyes of the law, that ye may not offend him who is your lawgiver." (D&C 64:12-13.) DCBM, 4:331)

9 And their meetings were ^aconducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the ^bpower of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done. (Today, just as in the Nephite Church, our meetings should be filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. To ensure this, leaders should prayerfully seek the guidance of the Lord in planning meetings, in selecting speakers and the topics to be addressed, and in the choosing of the sacred hymns of praise. Meetings should be conducted in a reverential manner that will be conducive to the spirit of true worship. This scriptural injunction to see that meetings are conducted "after the manner of the workings of the Spirit" is not reserved or directed solely to presiding officers. Speakers and teachers should likewise prayerfully seek inspiration that their part will be "led by the Spirit." Congregation members, too, have a sacred obligation to spiritually prepare for meetings and attend them in the proper frame of mind so as to be touched by the power of the Holy Ghost. When all members of the Church recognize him who is the Head and seek to commune with him through reverent worship at Church meetings, then the Spirit of the Lord can be poured out upon the Saints. In these circumstances they "understand one another, and . . . are edified and rejoice together "(see D&C 50:17-22). DCBM, 4:322)

Additional Reading:

Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service

President Gordon B. Hinckley

May you look upon the Church as your great and good friend, your refuge when the world appears to be closing around you, your hope when things are dark, your pillar of fire.



Now brethren, it becomes my privilege to speak to you, and I will repeat some things that have been said during this conference with the hope of giving emphasis to them. This has been a wonderful meeting, and if the counsel we have received is heeded, we shall all be the better for it.

I believe that no member of the Church has received the ultimate which this Church has to give until he or she has received his or her temple blessings in the house of the Lord. Accordingly, we are doing all that we know how to do to expedite the construction of these sacred buildings and make the blessings received therein more generally available.

With the dedication of the St. Louis Temple last June we have 50 working temples. We will soon dedicate the Vernal Utah Temple. The next dedication is scheduled for June of 1998 in Preston, England.

I am pleased to report that the temples in Colombia; Ecuador; the Dominican Republic; Bolivia; Spain; Recife and Campinas, Brazil; Mexico; Boston; New York; and Albuquerque are all moving forward either in planning or in various stages of construction. Our previously announced plan to construct a temple in Venezuela is also going forward, and we are hopeful of acquiring a site in the very near future. We continue to work on permits of various kinds, against some opposition, for temples in Billings, Montana, and Nashville, Tennessee.

I am now pleased to announce our intent to build temples in Houston, Texas; and in Pôrto Alegre, Brazil. All of this speaks of our great interest in vigorously moving forward this important work. Altogether I think we have about 17 temples in some course of construction, and that is a prodigious undertaking.

But there are many areas of the Church that are remote, where the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances? While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright and clear.

We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances. They would be built to temple standards, which are much higher than meetinghouse standards. They would accommodate baptisms for the dead, the endowment service, sealings, and all other ordinances to be had in the Lord's house for both the living and the dead.

They would be presided over, wherever possible, by local men called as temple presidents, just as stake presidents are called. They would have an indefinite period of appointment. They would live in the area, in their own homes. One counselor would serve as temple recorder, the other as temple engineer. All ordinance workers would be local people who would serve in other capacities in their wards and stakes.

Patrons would be expected to have their own temple clothing, thereby making unnecessary the construction of very costly laundries. A simple laundry would take care of baptismal clothing. There would be no eating facilities.

These structures would be open according to need, maybe only one or two days a week--that would be left to the judgment of the temple president. Where possible, we would place such a building on the same grounds as the stake center, using the same parking lot for both facilities, thereby affecting a great savings.

One of these small temples can be constructed for about the same cost it takes just to maintain a large temple for a single year. It can be constructed in a relatively short time, several months. I repeat that none of the essentials would be missing. Every ordinance performed in the house of the Lord would be available. These small buildings would have at least half the capacity of some of our much larger temples. They could be expanded when needed.

Now as you hear me say these things, I think stake presidents in many areas will say this is exactly what we need. Well, let us know of your needs, and we will give them prayerful and careful consideration, but please don't expect things to happen all at once. We need a little experience for this undertaking.

The operation of such temples will require some measure of sacrifice on the part of our faithful local Saints whom they serve. They not only will serve as ordinance workers, it will be expected that they will clean the buildings and take care of them. But the burden will not be heavy; in view of the blessings, it will be light indeed. There will be no paid employees: all of the work of operation will represent faith and devotion and dedication.

We are planning such structures immediately in Anchorage, Alaska; in the LDS colonies in northern Mexico; and in Monticello, Utah. In areas of greater Church membership we will build more of the traditional temples, but we are developing plans that will reduce the costs without any reduction in terms of the work to be performed therein. We are determined, brethren, to take the temples to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship.

Now, so much for that matter. What I say next you have heard me say before, and you have heard others speak of it. I hope we keep talking about it and then doing something about it. I do so because I am so concerned with it.

With the increase of missionary work throughout the world, there must be a comparable increase in the effort to make every convert feel at home in his or her ward or branch. Enough people will come into the Church this year to constitute more than 100 new average-size stakes. Unfortunately, with this acceleration in conversions, we are neglecting some of these new members. I am hopeful that a great effort will go forward throughout the Church, throughout the world, to retain every convert who comes into the Church.

This is serious business. There is no point in doing missionary work unless we hold on to the fruits of that effort. The two must be inseparable.

I should like to read you a letter. It is of a kind that we occasionally receive. A man writes:

"I feel compelled to write to you after reading your comments from the April general conference. I was especially moved by your comments on 'Converts and Young Men.' I was reading the article on the Internet and was touched by your words. Your perception of converts and their special needs was especially moving to me since I was a convert to the Church. I wanted to write to you and tell you that I agree with all of your statements, and that had more members been aware of the needs of a convert I would probably have stayed in the Church.

"I was converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1994. This was after a long period of time in which I was searching for the true church. I had explored just about every denomination and church but never found what I was looking for. From my first contact with the missionaries, I knew that they were presenting something to me that would change my life. I listened to

what they had to say, and I heard what I was looking for all those years. I don't know if there are words to describe how I felt after hearing their message. I was finally at peace. It all made sense. I earnestly studied the Church and felt as if I had found a 'home.' I decided to be baptized on October 8, 1994. It was one of the greatest days of my life.

"However, after my baptism, things with the Church changed. I suddenly was thrown into an environment where I was supposed to know what was going on. I now was not the focus of attention but just another member. I was treated as if I was in the Church for years.

"I had been told that there would be six discussions following my joining the Church. They never took place. At this same time, I was feeling intense pressure from my fiancée to not be in the Church. She was extremely anti-Mormon [in her] beliefs and didn't want me to be a part of it. We fought often about the Church. I thought that I could make her see my side of the story. I thought that if I just had more time to participate in the Church, she wouldn't think of it as a bad thing or as a cult. I thought that she would see from my example that this was the true Church and she would come to accept it.

"I used the missionaries for a lot of support. They helped . . . to think of ways to convince my fiancée that I had made the right decision. That worked until the missionaries were transferred. They moved away, and I was basically left alone. At least, that is how I thought. I looked to the members for support, but there was none. The bishop helped, but he could only do so much. I gradually lost my 'warm, fuzzy feeling' about the Church. I felt like a stranger. I began to doubt the Church and its message. Eventually, I started to listen more to my fiancée. Then I made a decision that maybe I had rushed into the Church too quickly. I wrote my bishop and asked that my name be removed from the Church records. I allowed this to be done. That was a low point in my life.

"Now, it's two years since I left the Church. I have gone back to [my old church] and haven't been involved with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since then. I am constantly praying and asking God to guide me. I know in my heart that He will guide me to His true Church. However, I don't know if that is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or if it even exists at all. I regret that I left the Church and had my name removed from the records, but at the time I felt that there was no other option. The experience left a bad impression with me, and it would be difficult to overcome.

"As the Church prepares to implement a program for the retention of new converts, I wanted you to know . . . that I think a lot of new converts may have similar experiences to mine. I know that there are people who are joining the Church against the advice of friends and family. This is a big step for them, and they should be supported at this critical time. I know from my past that had the support been there, I would not be writing this letter to you.

"Thank you for your time," and he signs the letter.

What a tragedy. What a terrible tragedy. I believe the writer still has a testimony of this work. That testimony has been with him since the time he was baptized, but he has felt neglected and of no consequence to anyone.

Someone has failed, failed miserably. I say to bishops throughout the world that with all you have to do--and we recognize that it is much--you cannot disregard the converts. Most of them do not need very much. As I have said before, they need a friend. They need something to do, a responsibility. They need nurturing with the good word of God. They come into the Church with enthusiasm for what they have found. We must immediately build on that enthusiasm. You have people in your wards who can be

friends to every convert. They can listen to them, guide them, answer their questions, and be there to help in all circumstances and in all conditions. Brethren, this loss must stop. It is unnecessary. I am satisfied the Lord is not pleased with us. I invite you, every one of you, to make this a matter of priority in your administrative work. I invite every member to reach out in friendship and love for those who come into the Church as converts.

You will hear much about this in the months to come. I mention it now only to give my wholehearted endorsement.

Permit me now to speak of another matter. I wish to speak to every boy who is listening tonight. And I express appreciation for what the other Brethren have said to them.

First, let me say that we honor and respect you young men. You represent a marvelous generation in this Church. I have said again and again that I believe this is the best generation we have ever had. You and the young women are tremendous. You study the scriptures. You pray. You attend seminary at sacrifice to yourselves. You try to do the right thing. You have testimonies of this work, and most of you live accordingly. I compliment you most generously! I express to you our great love for you. I wish only to say one or two things, adding to the things I have previously said, which I hope will be encouraging as you go forward with your lives.

I could wish for you nothing better than to see in your lives total loyalty to the Church, total faith in its divine mission, total love for the work of the Lord with a desire to move it forward, and total dedication in performing your duties as members of the Aaronic Priesthood.

You live in a world of terrible temptations. Pornography, with its sleazy filth, sweeps over the earth like a horrible, engulfing tide. It is poison. Do not watch it or read it. It will destroy you if you do. It will take from you your self-respect. It will rob you of a sense of the beauties of life. It will tear you down and pull you into a slough of evil thoughts and possibly of evil actions. Stay away from it. Shun it as you would a foul disease, for it is just as deadly. Be virtuous in thought and in deed. God has planted in you, for a purpose, a divine urge which may be easily subverted to evil and destructive ends. When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in high school don't need this, and neither do the girls.

We receive letters, we constantly deal with people who, under the pressures of life, marry while very young. There is an old saying, "Marry in haste, repent at leisure." How true that is.

Have a wonderful time with the young women. Do things together, but do not get too serious too soon. You have missions ahead of you, and you cannot afford to compromise this great opportunity and responsibility.

The Lord has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45).

Stay away from alcohol. Graduation from high school is no reason for a beer bust. Better stay away and be thought a prude than go through life regretting it ever afterwards. Stay away from drugs. You cannot afford to touch them. They will utterly destroy you. The euphoria will quickly pass, and the deadly, strangling clutches of this evil thing will embrace you in its power. You will become a slave, a debauched slave. You will lose control of your life and your actions. Do not experiment with them. Stay free of them!

Walk in the sunlight, strength, and virtue of self-control and of absolute integrity.

Get all the schooling you can. Education is the key that unlocks the door of opportunity. God has placed upon this people a mandate to acquire knowledge "even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118; see also D&C 109:7, 14).

You are a peculiar people. Of course you are. You have bypassed the things of the world. You are on your way to something higher and better. You have education to be obtained. You have marriage before you as a great and sacred opportunity in the house of the Lord.

You have missions to perform. Each of you should plan for missionary service. You may have some doubts. You may have some fears. Face your doubts and your fears with faith. Prepare yourselves to go. You have not only the opportunity; you have the responsibility. The Lord has blessed and favored you in a remarkable and wonderful way. Is it too much to ask that you give two years totally immersed in His service?

My young brethren, you are something special. You must rise above the ordinary. You must put on the whole armor of God and walk with virtue. You know what is right. You know what is wrong. You know when and how to make the choice. You know that there is a power in heaven on which you can call in your time of extremity and need. Pray with fervency and with faith. Pray to the God of heaven whom you love and who loves you. Pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His very life for you. Stand up and walk as becomes the sons of God.

We love you. We pray for you. We count on you so very, very much. May you be watched over and safeguarded and blessed of the Lord.

Now I wish to say something to bishops and stake presidents concerning missionary service. It is a sensitive matter. There seems to be growing in the Church an idea that all young women as well as all young men should go on missions. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot.

I confess that I have two granddaughters on missions. They are bright and beautiful young women. They are working hard and accomplishing much good. Speaking with their bishops and their parents, they made their own decisions to go. They did not tell me until they turned their papers in. I had nothing to do with their decision to go.

Now, having made that confession, I wish to say that the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in saying to our young sisters that they are not under obligation to go on missions. I hope I can say what I have to say in a way that will not be offensive to anyone. Young women should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men. Some of them will very much wish to go. If so, they should counsel with their bishop as well as their parents. If the idea persists, the bishop will know what to do.

I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation.

We do not ask the young women to consider a mission as an essential part of their life's program. Over a period of many years, we have held the age level higher for them in an effort to keep the number going relatively small. Again to the sisters I say that you will be as highly respected, you will be considered as

being as much in the line of duty, your efforts will be as acceptable to the Lord and to the Church whether you go on a mission or do not go on a mission.

We constantly receive letters from young women asking why the age for sister missionaries is not the same as it is for elders. We simply give them the reasons. We know that they are disappointed. We know that many have set their hearts on missions. We know that many of them wish this experience before they marry and go forward with their adult lives. I certainly do not wish to say or imply that their services are not wanted. I simply say that a mission is not necessary as a part of their lives.

Now, that may appear to be something of a strange thing to say in priesthood meeting. I say it here because I do not know where else to say it. The bishops and stake presidents of the Church have now heard it. And they must be the ones who make the judgment in this matter.

That is enough on that subject.

Now in closing, I simply want to express my love for each of you. You men and boys provide the leadership for this great organization, which is moving across the world in a marvelous and miraculous manner. I have not the slightest concern about the future. This Church has become a great builder of leaders. One sees them everywhere. Converts of only a few years are serving as bishops and stake presidents and in other capacities. What a wonderful thing you are doing, my brethren.

Husbands, live the gospel, be kind to your wives. You cannot serve acceptably in the Church if there is conflict at home. Fathers, be kind to your children. Be companionable with them. As hard as you may labor in gathering the necessities of the world, no asset you will ever have will compare with the love and loyalty of the woman with whom you joined hands over the altar in the temple, and the affection and respect of your children.

May each of you be blessed in your vocational pursuits whatever they may be, so long as they are honorable. May you look upon the Church as your great and good friend, your refuge when the world appears to be closing around you, your hope when things are dark, your pillar of fire by night and your cloud by day as you tread the pathways of your lives. May the Lord be mindful of you and merciful and kind to you. May you find great joy in that which you do in His service is my humble prayer, with an expression of love and affection for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Care for New Converts

Elder Carl B. Pratt
Of the Seventy

In building the kingdom of God, every positive act, every friendly greeting, every warm smile, every thoughtful, kind note contributes to the strength of the whole.



Brothers and sisters, I bring you greetings from the Saints of southern Mexico. I was born in Mexico, as were my father and my grandfather before me. Although I was raised and educated in the United States from about six years of age, I retained throughout my life a love for and a fascination with Latin America, its wonderful people, and its kaleidoscope of cultures. Although as a child I was always aware of my family roots in Mexico and their role in the establishment of the Lord's kingdom there, my real love began when, as a young missionary in Argentina, I watched people, prepared by the Spirit, eagerly accept the gospel and I saw the peace and joy that it brought to their lives. My growing love was not just for Latin America but for the work of the Lord among the people there.

So, in 1975, with less than four years out of law school, there was no hesitation on my part when I was offered a position as Church legal counsel in South America. With three small children, my wife and I moved to Montevideo, Uruguay. We were blessed with five more children in the ensuing years, born to us in various countries of South America. Our children have been raised in the Spanish-speaking countries of the world, and each one has a deep appreciation for the diversity in their cultural and linguistic heritage.

In the past 22 years we have had a front row seat to watch the explosive unfolding of the Lord's work in Latin America. Literally millions have joined the Church in these years, and we have seen it grow from a mere handful of stakes to over 700 at the present time. We have six functioning temples and five more under construction in these countries. What a tremendously exciting time to be alive and to be involved in this great work of blessing our Father's children.

Yes, these past years have been incredibly exciting, challenging, and immensely enriching for us as a family, but we have learned much more than geography, culture, and language. We have learned new and deeper meanings for words like *love*, *joy*, *service*, and *sacrifice*. For example, we have watched families save for years and then travel for up to 72 hours on a cramped bus, with small children, over poor roads, just to be able to enjoy the blessings of the sacred ordinances of the temple. We have watched humble, devoted priesthood and auxiliary leaders strive to build the kingdom and to bless the lives of the Saints, but without having the advantages of telephones or personal vehicles.

We have also learned that no one culture, people, or country has a corner on love, warmth, or kindness. As we would periodically return to the United States to visit family and friends, it would be our privilege to attend various wards in several different states. It wasn't until our children became adolescents that we began to notice differences in the spirits of the various wards. Some wards our children loved to visit because they quickly found friends among the youth, and we all received a warm and hearty welcome. But there were other wards to which our children returned with less enthusiasm, and there was a noticeable absence of the warm and hearty welcome.

We then began to observe that in some wards we visited in the United States as well as in Latin America, if we had been investigators or new members, we would not have felt very welcome. The Apostle Paul taught the Ephesians, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). And yet, on occasion we felt like "strangers and foreigners" in the very Church of Jesus Christ to which we belonged.

These experiences helped us become aware of the discomfort that newcomers might occasionally feel in coming to our chapels, and these made us conscious of the need we *all* have to improve what we call our fellowshipping skills. We have occasionally observed wards in Latin America, Spain, and in the United

States where humble new converts to the Church have *not* been received with open arms or warm *abrazos*, and so we have all seen a need to improve our retention of new converts.

Brothers and sisters, we have the richest blessings that God can give to His children. We have the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We ought to be the most open, friendly, happy, kind, considerate, thoughtful, loving people in the whole world. Now, we do pretty well at fulfilling callings, at going to meetings, at paying our tithing; but have we learned to truly live the second great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? (Matt. 22:39). This is not something that can be assigned to the elders quorum or to the visiting teachers; this has to spring from the heart of every true disciple of Christ, a person who will look automatically and without being asked for opportunities to serve, to uplift, and to strengthen his fellowman.

We are reminded of the Savior's words, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Will nonmembers, new converts, and visitors to our chapels recognize us as His disciples by the warmth of our greeting, by the ease of our smiles, by the kindness and genuine concern that shine in our eyes?

Let us pay more attention to those who are new to our congregations. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? . . . And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" (Matt. 5:46-47).

In building the kingdom of God, every positive act, every friendly greeting, every warm smile, every thoughtful, kind note contributes to the strength of the whole. It is my prayer that we may be open and outgoing, friendly, and helpful to all who come among us. But let us give special care and concern for the new converts to the Church. When we detect a halting step or a stumble as they begin their journey on the gospel path, let us be there to lift and support with words of kindness and concern; let us be available to give gentle, loving counsel that will strengthen and sustain. Let us conscientiously look for occasions to show that love which the Savior admonished us to have when He said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (John 13:34).

I testify that this is the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He lives, that He directs this great work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The following instructions are taken from the instruction manual, Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood.

How to Perform Ordinances Today

Brethren who perform priesthood ordinances should prepare themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit. They should perform each ordinance in a dignified manner, making sure it meets the following requirements:

1. All ordinances must be performed in the name of Jesus Christ. When a person performs priesthood ordinances, he should realize that he is acting on behalf of the Savior.
2. All ordinances must be performed by the authority of the priesthood. Only brethren who hold the necessary priesthood and are worthy should perform or stand in the circle for an ordinance.

3. The following ordinances must be authorized by the presiding authority who holds the proper keys (normally the bishop or stake president): naming and blessing children, baptizing, confirming, administering the sacrament, conferring the priesthood and ordaining to an office, and dedicating graves. Consecrating oil, administering to the sick, and giving father's blessings do not need to be authorized by the presiding authority. A man is authorized to perform these ordinances if he holds the Melchizedek Priesthood and is worthy.

4. All ordinances must be performed with their necessary procedures such as using specified words or laying on hands.

“Priesthood leaders teach brethren how to perform ordinances and blessings. Leaders also help fathers be prepared and worthy to perform ordinances and blessings for family members” (Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders [1998], 171).

Naming and Blessing of Children

Under the direction of the presiding authority, only brethren who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood may participate in the ordinance of naming and blessing children (see D&C 20:70). Worthy fathers who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood should be encouraged to bless their own children.

When blessing a baby, brethren gather in a circle and place their hands under the baby. When blessing an older child, brethren place their hands lightly on the child's head. The person who gives the blessing:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father.
2. States that the blessing is performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives the child a name.
4. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Baptism

The ordinance of baptism is performed only by a worthy priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder under the direction of the presiding authority. The priesthood holder:

1. Stands in the water with the person to be baptized.
2. (For convenience and safety) holds the person's right wrist with his left hand; the person being baptized holds the priesthood holder's left wrist with his or her left hand.
3. Raises his right arm to the square.
4. States the person's full name and says, “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen” (D&C 20:73).

5. Has the person hold his or her nose with the right hand (for convenience); then the priesthood holder places his right hand high on the person's back and immerses the person completely, including the person's clothing.
6. Helps the person come up out of the water.

Each baptism must be witnessed by two priests or Melchizedek Priesthood holders, who make sure it is performed properly. The baptism must be repeated if the prayer was not stated accurately or if part of the body or clothing of the person being baptized was not immersed completely.

Confirmation

A person receives the ordinance of confirmation after he or she has been baptized (see D&C 20:41). Under the direction of the bishopric or branch presidency, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may participate in this ordinance. They place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the person who performs the ordinance:

1. States the person's full name.
2. States that the ordinance is performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Confirms the person a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. Bestows the gift of the Holy Ghost by saying, "Receive the Holy Ghost."
5. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Sacrament

The sacrament is a very sacred ordinance and is administered under the direction of the bishopric or branch presidency. Aaronic Priesthood holders usually perform these duties. However, Melchizedek Priesthood holders may bless and pass the sacrament when there are not enough Aaronic Priesthood brethren or if the bishop or branch president occasionally invites them to do so.

Every priesthood holder who participates in this ordinance should understand that he is acting on behalf of the Lord. The personal appearance and attitude of all who participate should reflect the sacred nature of the ordinance. Priesthood holders should wash their hands before preparing, blessing, or passing the sacrament.

Worthy teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may prepare the sacrament. Before the meeting begins, those who prepare the sacrament should make sure that clean bread trays with unbroken bread, clean water trays with cups filled with fresh water, and clean white tablecloths are in place.

Worthy priests and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may bless the sacrament. Worthy deacons, teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may pass the sacrament.

During the sacrament hymn, the priesthood holders who will bless the sacrament should break the bread into bite-sized pieces. Following the hymn, the person who blesses the bread kneels and offers the sacrament prayer for the bread (see D&C 20:77). The sacrament prayers were revealed by the Lord. The bishop or branch president makes sure that they are spoken clearly, accurately, and with dignity. If the bishop or branch president must correct an error, he should be careful to avoid causing embarrassment or distracting from the sacred nature of the ordinance.

After the prayer, deacons or other priesthood holders pass the bread to the congregation in a reverent and orderly manner. The presiding officer receives the sacrament first. When brethren finish passing the bread, they return the trays to the sacrament table. Those officiating at the sacrament table replace the cloth over the bread trays and uncover the water trays. The person who blesses the water kneels and offers the sacrament prayer for the water (see D&C 20:79), substituting the word water for wine. After the prayer, deacons or other priesthood holders pass the water to the congregation. When they finish, they return the trays to the sacrament table, wait for the officiators to cover the trays, then reverently take their seats.

Conferral of the Priesthood and Ordination to a Priesthood Office

Ordination to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood is done by or under the direction of the bishop or branch president. Ordination to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood is done by or under the direction of the stake or mission president. To perform a priesthood ordination, one or more authorized priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. The priesthood bearer who performs the ordination:

1. Calls the person by his full name.
2. States the authority by which the ordination is performed (Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood).
3. Confers the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood unless it has already been conferred.
4. Ordains the person to an office in the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood and bestows the rights, powers, and authority of that office.
5. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Consecration of Oil

One or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders must consecrate olive oil before it is used to anoint the sick or afflicted. No other oil may be used. To do this, a priesthood holder:

1. Holds an open container of olive oil.
2. Addresses Heavenly Father.
3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

4. Consecrates the oil (not the container) and sets it apart for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Administering to the Sick

Only Melchizedek Priesthood holders may administer to the sick or afflicted. Administering to the sick has two parts: (1) anointing with oil and (2) sealing the anointing.

The anointing is done by one Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He:

1. Puts a small amount of consecrated oil on the person's head.
2. Places his hands lightly on the person's head and calls the person by his or her full name.
3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. States that he is anointing with consecrated oil.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Normally, two or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. The one who seals the anointing:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Seals the anointing.
4. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

If a person requests more than one blessing for the same illness, the priesthood holder usually does not need to anoint with oil after the first blessing. Instead, he gives a blessing by the laying on of hands and the authority of the priesthood.

Dedication of Graves

Graves should be dedicated by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, as authorized by the priesthood officer who conducts the service. To dedicate a grave, he:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Dedicates and consecrates the burial plot as the resting place for the body of the deceased.

4. (Where appropriate) prays that the place may be hallowed and protected until the Resurrection.
5. Asks the Lord to comfort the family and expresses thoughts as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Father's Blessings and Blessings of Comfort and Counsel

Fathers and others who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood may give blessings of comfort and counsel. Fathers may give their children blessings on special occasions such as when the children enter military service or leave home to go to school or on missions. A family may record a father's blessing in family records, but it is not preserved in Church records.

To give a father's blessing or other blessings of comfort and counsel, one or more worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the priesthood leader who gives the blessing:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that the blessing is performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Blesses the person as the Spirit directs.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.