

## Episode 8

### Stories from General Conference

#### PRIESTHOOD

**NARRATOR:** Priesthood is the topic of this series of stories from General Conference. In the October 2008 General Conference, Elder Richard G. Scott provided an excellent introduction to this series of stories as follows:

"The conferring of authority [of the priesthood] alone does not of itself bestow the power of the office. The extent to which we can exercise the power of the priesthood depends upon personal worthiness, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to His commandments. When supported by a secure foundation of gospel knowledge, our capacity to worthily use the priesthood is greatly enhanced." "The perfect role model for use of the holy priesthood is our Savior, Jesus Christ. He ministered with love, compassion, and charity. His life was a matchless example of humility and power. The greatest blessings from the use of the priesthood flow from humble service to others without thought of self. By following His example as a faithful, obedient priesthood bearer, we can access great power. When required, we can exercise the power of healing, of blessing, of consoling, and of counseling, as the quiet promptings of the Spirit are faithfully followed." (From Priesthood Session, October 2008 General Conference, "Honor the Priesthood and Use it Well.")

**NARRATOR:** In the April 1999 General Conference, President Boyd K. Packer provided additional insight into the priesthood with the following account:

(President Boyd K. Packer, Sunday Morning Session, April 1999)

Years ago a friend of mine went to a large university to study under the ranking authority in the field of counseling and guidance. This professor quickly took an interest in this personable, intelligent young Latter-day Saint. He attracted attention as he moved through the course work required for a doctor's degree.

He chose the Latter-day Saint bishop as the subject for his dissertation. All went well until he described the ordination of a bishop, the power of discernment, and the right of a bishop to spiritual guidance.

His doctoral committee felt that such references had no place in a scholarly paper, and they insisted that he take them out. He thought he might at least say that Latter-day Saints *believe* the bishop has spiritual insight. But the committee denied him even this, for they

would be quite embarrassed to have this spiritual ingredient included in a scholarly dissertation.

He was told that with some little accommodation--specifically, leaving out all the references to revelation--his dissertation would be published and his reputation established.

He did the best he could. His dissertation did not contain enough about the Spirit to satisfy him and too much to be fully accepted by his worldly professors. But he received his degree.

I asked this friend what was the most important thing he had learned in his study of bishops. He answered, "I learned that the mantle is far, far greater than the intellect, that the priesthood is the guiding power."

**NARRATOR:       The brotherhood found in priesthood quorums can be considered an example of the “guiding power” of the priesthood in our lives as illustrated by the following story told by President Thomas S. Monson in the Priesthood Session of the April 1999 General Conference.**

(President Thomas S. Monson, Priesthood Session, April 1999)

And what of the priests? These young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue their home teaching duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

I remember as a deacon watching the priests as they would officiate at the sacrament table. One priest by the name of Barry had a lovely voice and would read the sacrament prayers with clear diction--as though he were competing in a speech contest. The other members of the ward, particularly the older sisters, would compliment him on his "golden voice." I think he became a bit proud. Jack, another priest in the ward, was hearing impaired, which caused his speech to be unnatural in its sound. We deacons would twitter at times when Jack would bless the emblems. How we dared to do so is beyond me, for Jack had hands like a bear and could have crushed any one of us.

On one occasion Barry, with the beautiful voice, and Jack, with the awkward delivery, were assigned together at the sacrament table. The hymn was sung; the two priests broke the bread. Barry knelt to pray, and we closed our eyes. But nothing happened. Soon we deacons opened our eyes to see what was causing the delay. I shall ever remember the picture of Barry frantically searching the table for the little white card on which were printed the sacrament prayers. It was nowhere to be found. What to do? Barry's face turned pink and then crimson as the congregation began to look in his direction.

Then Jack, with that bearlike hand, reached up and gently tugged Barry back onto the bench. He himself then knelt on the little footstool and began to pray: "O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this

bread to the souls of all those who partake of it. . . " He continued the prayer, and the bread was passed. Jack also blessed the water, and it was passed. What respect we deacons gained that day for Jack who, though handicapped in speech, had memorized the sacred prayers! Barry, too, had a new appreciation for Jack. A lasting bond of friendship had been established.

**NARRATOR:** **In the April 2006 General Conference, Sister Julie B. Beck explained how the priesthood is a “great equalizer”.**

(Sister Julie B. Beck, Saturday Morning, April 2006)

Through the blessings of the priesthood, the Lord shows us that He is "no respecter of persons." In my travels, I usually have the chance to visit members in their homes. Some of those homes are very basic dwellings. At first I would say to myself: "Why am I blessed with a house that has electricity and plumbing when this family does not even have water near their home? Does the Lord love them less than He loves me?"

Then one day I sat in a temple next to a sister who lives in a humble house. I spent two hours at her side. I looked often into her beautiful eyes and saw the love of the Lord in them. As we finished our work in the temple, I had a powerful realization. In all of the eternal blessings, in all of our most important privileges and opportunities, we were equals. I had been "baptized unto repentance," and so had she. I had spiritual gifts, and so did she. I had the opportunity to repent, and so did she. I had received the Holy Ghost, and so had she. I had received temple ordinances, and so had she. If both of us had left this world together at that moment, we would have arrived equal before the Lord in our blessings and potential.

Priesthood blessings are the great equalizer. Those blessings are the same for men and women, for boys and girls; they are the same for married and single, rich and poor, for the intellectual and the illiterate, for the well-known and the obscure.

I am grateful that through the infinite fairness and love of God, all men and women were given equal partnership, gifts, blessings, and potential through priesthood ordinances and spiritual gifts. Because of the priesthood, which is woven in and around and through our lives, every power, every covenant we need to do our life's work and walk back to our heavenly home has been poured out upon our heads.

**NARRATOR:** **In the 1999 Priesthood Session of General Conference, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin provided the men of the Church with an analogy from his boyhood which applies to all priesthood holders as they seek to better “grow into” their sacred responsibilities.**

(Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, Priesthood Session, October 1999)

I am very humbled by this great responsibility to address this body of brethren who hold the priesthood of God. I pray sincerely for the Spirit of the Lord to attend us so that what I have to say will sink deep into your hearts.

I love speaking to the brethren of the priesthood, particularly to the young men of our Church who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. Believe it or not, it doesn't seem all that long ago since I was a young man. When I was a deacon, the ominous signs of the Great Depression began to appear. Tens of thousands lost their jobs. Money was scarce. Families had to do without. Some young people did not ask their mothers, "What's for dinner?" because they knew all too well that their cupboards held very little.

My parents were hardworking. They made every penny stretch as far as possible. That was probably the major reason everything they gave me was always two or three sizes too large.

I was 12 years old when I received my first pair of ice skates, so large that I had to stuff a third of the toe space with cotton.

When I took them out of the box, I looked up and said, "Mother, I can't skate with these."

"Be grateful for what you have, Joseph," she'd say. And then, the phrase I had become so accustomed to hearing, "Don't worry; you'll grow into them."

A year later, what I wanted more than anything else was football shoulder pads and a helmet. On Christmas morning, I opened my packages and there they were, shoulder pads and a helmet, except they were sized to fit Goliath--who, by the way, was six cubits or about nine feet tall.

"Mother, they're too big," I said.

"Be grateful for what you have, Joseph," she said again. "Don't worry; you'll grow into them."

Prior to high school I played a lot of neighborhood football. When I put on the new equipment, the shoulder pads hung so far over my shoulders that about the only things they protected were my elbows.

Even though I stuffed cotton and newspaper in the helmet, it jostled every time I took a step. When I ran, it would turn and turn until the only way I could see where I was going would be to look out through the ear hole.

One time I rambled for a long gain at full speed right into a tree. Each time I was tackled, the helmet would spin 180 degrees and I'd get up looking like my head had spun with it. Then I would have to repack the cotton and newspaper as best I could, put it back on, and head back to the huddle.

My father was truly a great man. I remember one day putting my feet in my father's shoes. I was amazed at the size. Would I ever be big enough to fill his shoes? Could I ever grow into the man my father was? I wondered.

I think back on those days with some tenderness. Curiously enough, I also look back with tenderness to my dear mother's encouraging words, "Don't worry, Joseph; you'll grow into them."

In a similar way, we all need to learn how to "grow into" our responsibilities as priesthood bearers.

**NARRATOR: Members of the Church often hear about the “keys of the priesthood”. This refers to special functions of the priesthood which are carefully delegated to others. In the April 2008 General Conference, President Boyd K. Packer told of the following experience relating to “keys of the priesthood”.**

(President Boyd K. Packer, April 2008, Sunday Morning Session)

In 1976 an area general conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Following the closing session, President Spencer W. Kimball desired to visit the Vor Frue Church, where the Thorvaldsen statues of the *Christus* and of the Twelve Apostles stand. He had visited there some years earlier and wanted all of us to see it, to go there.

To the front of the church, behind the altar, stands the familiar statue of the *Christus* with His arms turned forward and somewhat outstretched, the hands showing the imprint of the nails, and the wound in His side very clearly visible. Along each side stand the statues of the Apostles, Peter at the front to the right and the other Apostles in order.

Most of our group was near the rear of the chapel with the custodian. I stood up front with President Kimball before the statue of Peter with Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Johan Helge Benthin, president of the Copenhagen stake.

In Peter's hand, depicted in marble, is a set of heavy keys. President Kimball pointed to those keys and explained what they symbolized. Then, in an act I shall never forget, he turned to President Benthin and with unaccustomed firmness pointed his finger at him and said, "I want you to tell everyone in Denmark that I hold the keys! We hold the *real* keys, and we use them every day."

I will never forget that declaration, that testimony from the prophet. The influence was spiritually powerful; the impression was physical in its impact.

We walked to the back of the chapel where the rest of the group was standing. Pointing to the statues, President Kimball said to the kind custodian, "These are the dead Apostles." Pointing to me, he said, "Here we have the *living* Apostles. Elder Packer is an Apostle. Elder Thomas S. Monson and Elder L. Tom Perry are Apostles, and I am an Apostle. We are the living Apostles.

“You read about the Seventies in the New Testament, and here are two of the living Seventies, Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Elder Robert D. Hales.”

The custodian, who up to that time had shown no emotion, suddenly was in tears.

I felt I had had an experience of a lifetime.

**NARRATOR: The priesthood is exercised in many ways, but always in the service of others. President James E. Faust told a story in the Priesthood Session of the October 2006 General Conference that occurred over one hundred years ago, which provides an example of the use of the priesthood in the service of others.**

(President James E. Faust, Priesthood Session, October 2006)

Over a century ago when Elder J. Golden Kimball presided over the Southern States Mission, he called for a meeting of the elders. They were to meet in a secluded spot in the woods so they would have privacy. One of the elders had a problem with one of his legs. It was raw and swollen to at least twice the size of his other leg. But the elder insisted on attending this special priesthood meeting in the woods. So two of the elders carried him to this meeting place.

Elder Kimball asked the missionaries, "Brethren, what are you preaching?"

They said, "We are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"Are you telling these people that you have the power and authority, through faith, to heal the sick?" he asked.

They said, "Yes."

"Well then," he continued, "why don't you believe it?"

The young man with the swollen leg spoke up and said, "I believe it." Here is the rest of the story told in Elder Kimball's words: "[The elder] sat down on a stump and the elders gathered around him. He was anointed and I administered to him, and he was healed right in their presence. It was quite a shock; and every other elder that was sick was administered to, and they were all healed. We went out of that priesthood meeting and the elders received their appointments, and there was a joy and happiness that cannot be described." Their nutrient of faith had been replenished and their zeal for missionary work revived.

**NARRATOR: Use of the priesthood must also be accompanied by faith, which was illustrated by the following story told by Elder David A. Bednar in the April 2008 General Conference.**

(Elder David A. Bednar, April 2008, Sunday Afternoon Session)

A few years ago a family traveled to Europe from the United States. Shortly after arriving at their destination, a 13-year-old son became quite ill. The mother and father initially thought his upset stomach was caused by fatigue from the long flight, and the family routinely continued on its journey.

As the day continued, the son's condition became worse. Dehydration was increasing. The father gave his son a priesthood blessing, but no improvement was immediately evident.

Several hours passed by, and the mother knelt by her son's side, pleading in prayer to Heavenly Father for the boy's well-being. They were far from home in an unfamiliar country and did not know how to obtain medical assistance.

The mother asked her son if he would like to pray with her. She knew that merely waiting for the anticipated blessing would not be enough; they needed to continue to act. Explaining that the blessing he had received was still in effect, she suggested again petitioning in prayer, as did the ancient Apostles, "Lord, Increase our faith" ( Luke 17:5). The prayer included a profession of trust in priesthood power and a commitment to persevere in doing whatever might be required for the blessing to be honored—if that blessing at that time was in accordance with God's will. Shortly after they offered this simple prayer, the son's condition improved.

The faithful action of the mother and her son helped to invite the promised priesthood power and in part satisfied the requirement that we "dispute not because [we] see not, for [we] receive no witness until after the trial of [our] faith" (Ether 12:6). Just as the prison holding Alma and Amulek did not tumble to the earth "until after their faith," and just as Ammon and his missionary brethren did not witness mighty miracles in their ministries "until after their faith" (see Ether 12:12-15), so the healing of this 13-year-old boy did not occur *until after their faith* and was accomplished "according to their faith in their prayers" (D&C 10:47).

**NARRATOR:**

**In the Priesthood Session of the October 2008 General Conference, President Thomas S. Monson passed along a story received from a long-time friend. It provides a dramatic illustration of the power of the priesthood, coupled with faith and prayer.**

(President Thomas S. Monson, October 2008, Priesthood Session)

Several years ago I received a letter from a longtime friend. He bore his testimony in that letter. I would like to share part of it with you tonight, since it illustrates the strength of the priesthood in one who learned what he should learn, who did what he should do, and

who always tried to be what he should be. I shall read excerpts of that letter from my friend Theron W. Borup, who passed away three years ago at the age of 90:

“At the age of eight, when I was baptized and received the Holy Ghost, I was much impressed about being good and able to have the Holy Ghost to be a help throughout my life. I was told that the Holy Ghost associated only in good company and that when evil entered our lives, he would leave. Not knowing when I would need his promptings and guidance, I tried to so live that I would not lose this gift. On one occasion it saved my life.

“During World War II, I was an engineer-gunner in a B-24 bomber fighting in the South Pacific. . . . One day there was an announcement that the longest bombing flight ever made would be attempted to knock out an oil refinery. The promptings of the Spirit told me I would be assigned on this flight but that I would not lose my life. At the time I was the president of the LDS group.

“The combat was ferocious as we flew over Borneo. Our plane was hit by attacking planes and soon burst into flames, and the pilot told us to prepare to jump. I went out last. We were shot at by enemy pilots as we floated down. I had trouble inflating my life raft. Bobbing up and down in the water, I began to drown and passed out. I came to momentarily and cried, ‘God save me!’ . . . Again I tried inflating the life raft and this time was successful. With just enough air in it to keep me afloat, I rolled over on top of it, too exhausted to move.

“For three days we floated about in enemy territory with ships all about us and planes overhead. Why they couldn’t see a yellow group of rafts on blue water is a mystery,” he wrote. “A storm came up, and waves thirty feet high almost tore our rafts apart. Three days went by with no food or water. The others asked me if I prayed. I answered that I did pray and we would indeed be rescued. That evening we saw our submarine that was there to rescue us, but it passed by. The next morning it did [the same. We knew] this was the last day [it would] be in the area. Then came the promptings of the Holy Ghost. ‘You have the priesthood. Command the sub to pick you up.’ Silently I prayed, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the priesthood, turn about and pick us up.’ In a few minutes, they were alongside of us. When on deck, the captain . . . said, ‘I don’t know how we ever found you, for we were not even looking for you.’ *I knew.*”

I leave with you my testimony that this work in which we are engaged is true. The Lord is at the helm. That we may ever follow Him is my sincere prayer, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**NARRATOR:**

**Our final story was told by Elder Mervyn B. Arnold in the Priesthood Session of the April 2004 General Conference. It is an impressive example of a young man’s priesthood leader who went the second mile in priesthood service which ultimately resulted in great blessings.**

(Elder Mervyn B. Arnold, Priesthood Session, April 2004)

Brother José de Souza Marques was the type of leader who truly understood the principle taught by the Savior: “And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also” (D&C 84:106).

As a member of the branch presidency in Fortaleza, Brazil, Brother Marques, with the other priesthood leaders, developed a plan to reactivate those who were less active in his branch. One of those who was less active was a young man by the name of Fernando Araujo. Recently I spoke to Fernando, and he told me of his experience:

“I became involved in surfing competitions on Sunday mornings and stopped going to my Church meetings. One Sunday morning, Brother Marques knocked on my door and asked my nonmember mother if he could talk to me. When she told him I was sleeping, he asked permission to wake me. He said to me, ‘Fernando, you are late for church!’ Not listening to my excuses, he took me to church.

“The next Sunday the same thing happened, so on the third Sunday I decided to leave early to avoid him. As I opened the gate I found him sitting on his car, reading the scriptures. When he saw me he said, ‘Good! You are up early. Today we will go and find another young man!’ I appealed to my agency, but he said, ‘We can talk about that later.’

“After eight Sundays I could not get rid of him, so I decided to sleep at a friend’s house. I was at the beach the next morning when I saw a man dressed in a suit and tie walking toward me. When I saw that it was Brother Marques, I ran into the water. All of a sudden I felt someone’s hand on my shoulder. It was Brother Marques, in water up to his chest! He took me by the hand and said, ‘You [Ensign, 47] are late! Let’s go.’ When I argued that I didn’t have any clothes to wear, he replied, ‘They are in the car.’

“That day as we walked out of the ocean, I was touched by Brother Marques’s sincere love and worry for me. He truly understood the Savior’s words: ‘I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick’ (Ezekiel 34:16). Brother Marques didn’t just give me a ride to church—the quorum made sure I remained active. They planned activities that made me feel needed and wanted, I received a calling, and the quorum members became my friends.”

Following his reactivation, Brother Araujo went on a full-time mission and has served as bishop, stake president, mission president, and regional representative. His widowed mother, three sisters, and several cousins have also entered the waters of baptism.

**NARRATOR: This has been Stories from General Conference on the topic of Priesthood. Thank you for listening to the Mormon Channel.**