

The lord leads his church

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THE LORD'S LEADERSHIP OF HIS CHURCH REQUIRES GREAT AND STEADY FAITH FROM ALL WHO SERVE HIM ON EARTH.

MY DEAR BRETHREN WHO HOLD THE PRIESTHOOD OF GOD, TONIGHT I WISH TO SPEAK ABOUT THE WONDERFUL WAY IN WHICH THE LORD LEADS HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH. YOU ALREADY KNOW THE FUNDAMENTALS. I PRAY THAT THE HOLY GHOST WILL CONFIRM THEM TO YOU.

FIRST, JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH IN ALL THE EARTH.

SECOND, HE LEADS HIS CHURCH TODAY BY SPEAKING TO MEN CALLED AS PROPHETS, AND HE DOES IT THROUGH REVELATION.

THIRD, HE GAVE REVELATION TO HIS PROPHETS LONG AGO, STILL DOES, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO.

FOURTH, HE GIVES CONFIRMING REVELATION TO THOSE WHO SERVE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF HIS PROPHETS.

FROM THOSE FUNDAMENTALS, WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE LORD'S LEADERSHIP OF HIS CHURCH REQUIRES GREAT AND STEADY FAITH FROM ALL WHO SERVE HIM ON EARTH.

FOR INSTANCE, IT TAKES FAITH TO BELIEVE THAT THE RESURRECTED LORD IS WATCHING OVER THE DAILY DETAILS OF HIS KINGDOM. IT TAKES FAITH TO BELIEVE THAT HE CALLS IMPERFECT PEOPLE INTO POSITIONS OF TRUST. IT TAKES FAITH TO BELIEVE THAT HE KNOWS THE PEOPLE HE CALLS PERFECTLY, BOTH THEIR CAPACITIES AND THEIR POTENTIAL, AND SO MAKES NO MISTAKES IN HIS CALLS.

THAT MAY BRING A SMILE OR A SHAKE OF THE HEAD TO SOME IN THIS AUDIENCE—BOTH THOSE WHO THINK THEIR OWN CALL TO SERVE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MISTAKE AS WELL AS THOSE WHO PICTURE SOME THEY KNOW WHO SEEM POORLY SUITED TO THEIR PLACE IN THE LORD'S KINGDOM. MY COUNSEL TO BOTH GROUPS IS TO DELAY SUCH JUDGMENTS UNTIL YOU CAN BETTER SEE WHAT THE LORD SEES. THE JUDGMENT YOU NEED TO MAKE, INSTEAD, IS THAT *YOU* HAVE THE CAPACITY TO RECEIVE REVELATION AND TO ACT ON IT FEARLESSLY.

IT TAKES FAITH TO DO SO. IT TAKES EVEN GREATER FAITH TO BELIEVE THAT THE LORD HAS CALLED IMPERFECT HUMAN SERVANTS TO LEAD YOU. MY PURPOSE TONIGHT IS TO BUILD YOUR FAITH THAT GOD DIRECTS YOU IN YOUR SERVICE TO HIM. AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, MY HOPE IS TO BUILD YOUR FAITH THAT THE LORD IS INSPIRING THE IMPERFECT PERSONS HE HAS CALLED AS YOUR LEADERS.

YOU MAY THINK, AT FIRST, THAT SUCH FAITH IS NOT IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH AND KINGDOM. HOWEVER, YOU MAY DISCOVER—NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE IN THE CHAIN OF PRIESTHOOD SERVICE, FROM THE LORD'S PROPHET TO A NEW AARONIC PRIESTHOOD HOLDER—THAT FAITH IS ESSENTIAL.

LET'S START WITH WHAT FAITH MEANS FOR A TEACHERS OR A DEACONS QUORUM PRESIDENT. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR HIM TO HAVE FAITH THAT THE LORD CALLED HIM PERSONALLY, KNOWING THAT TEACHER'S WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS. HE HAS TO HAVE FAITH THAT THE MAN WHO ISSUED THE CALL RECEIVED REVELATION BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD. HIS COUNSELORS AND MEMBERS OF HIS QUORUM NEED THE SAME FAITH TO FOLLOW HIM WITH FEARLESS CONFIDENCE.

I SAW SUCH CONFIDENCE WHEN A BOY SAT WITH HIS DEACONS QUORUM PRESIDENCY ONE SUNDAY MORNING. HE WAS THEIR NEWLY CALLED SECRETARY. THAT YOUNG PRESIDENCY COUNSELED TOGETHER. THEY TALKED ABOUT SEVERAL WAYS THEY COULD FULFILL THE BISHOP'S REQUEST TO BRING A LESS-ACTIVE BOY BACK TO CHURCH. AFTER PRAYER AND DISCUSSION, THEY APPOINTED THE SECRETARY TO GO TO THE HOME OF A BOY WHO HAD NEVER COME TO A MEETING AND TO INVITE HIM.

THE SECRETARY DIDN'T KNOW THE BOY, BUT HE KNEW THAT ONE OF THE BOY'S PARENTS WAS LESS ACTIVE AND THE OTHER WAS NOT A MEMBER AND NOT FRIENDLY. THE SECRETARY FELT ANXIETY BUT NOT FEAR. HE KNEW THAT THE PROPHET OF GOD HAD ASKED PRIESTHOOD HOLDERS TO BRING BACK THE LOST SHEEP. AND HE HAD HEARD THE PRAYER OF HIS PRESIDENCY. HE HEARD THEM COME TO AGREEMENT ON THE NAME OF THE BOY TO BE RESCUED AND ON HIS OWN NAME.

I WAS WATCHING WHEN THE SECRETARY WALKED UP THE STREET TOWARD THE LESS-ACTIVE BOY'S HOUSE. HE WALKED SLOWLY AS IF HE WERE GOING INTO GREAT DANGER. BUT WITHIN A HALF HOUR HE CAME BACK DOWN THE ROAD WITH THE BOY, SMILING HAPPILY. I'M NOT SURE HE KNEW IT THEN, BUT HE HAD GONE WITH FAITH THAT HE WAS ON THE LORD'S ERRAND. THAT FAITH HAS STAYED WITH HIM AND HAS GROWN OVER HIS YEARS AS A MISSIONARY, A FATHER, A LEADER OF YOUNG MEN, AND A BISHOP.

LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT SUCH FAITH MEANS FOR A BISHOP. A BISHOP IS SOMETIMES CALLED TO SERVE PEOPLE WHO KNOW HIM WELL. WARD MEMBERS KNOW SOMETHING OF HIS HUMAN

WEAKNESSES AND HIS SPIRITUAL STRENGTHS, AND THEY KNOW THAT OTHERS IN THE WARD COULD HAVE BEEN CALLED—OTHERS WHO SEEM BETTER EDUCATED, MORE SEASONED, MORE PLEASANT, OR EVEN BETTER LOOKING.

THESE MEMBERS HAVE TO KNOW THE CALL TO SERVE AS A BISHOP CAME FROM THE LORD, BY REVELATION. WITHOUT THEIR FAITH, THE BISHOP, WHO WAS CALLED OF GOD, WILL FIND IT HARDER TO GET THE REVELATION HE NEEDS TO HELP THEM. HE WILL NOT SUCCEED WITHOUT THE FAITH OF THE MEMBERS TO SUSTAIN HIM.

HAPPILY, THE REVERSE IS ALSO TRUE. THINK OF THE LORD'S SERVANT KING BENJAMIN, WHO LED HIS PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE. THE PEOPLE'S HEARTS WERE SOFTENED BY THEIR FAITH THAT HE WAS CALLED OF GOD, DESPITE HIS HUMAN WEAKNESSES, AND THAT HIS WORDS CAME FROM GOD. YOU REMEMBER WHAT THE PEOPLE SAID: "YEA, WE BELIEVE ALL THE WORDS WHICH THOU HAST SPOKEN UNTO US; ... WE KNOW OF THEIR SURETY AND TRUTH, BECAUSE OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD OMNIPOTENT, WHICH HAS WROUGHT A MIGHTY CHANGE IN US, OR IN OUR HEARTS, THAT WE HAVE NO MORE DISPOSITION TO DO EVIL, BUT TO DO GOOD CONTINUALLY" ([MOSIAH 5:2](#)).

FOR A LEADER TO SUCCEED IN THE LORD'S WORK, THE PEOPLE'S TRUST THAT HE IS CALLED OF GOD MUST OVERRIDE THEIR VIEW OF HIS INFIRMITIES AND MORTAL WEAKNESSES. YOU REMEMBER HOW KING BENJAMIN EXPLAINED HIS OWN LEADERSHIP ROLE:

"I HAVE NOT COMMANDED YOU TO COME UP HITHER THAT YE SHOULD FEAR ME, OR THAT YE SHOULD THINK THAT I OF MYSELF AM MORE THAN A MORTAL MAN.

"BUT I AM LIKE AS YOURSELVES, SUBJECT TO ALL MANNER OF INFIRMITIES IN BODY AND MIND; YET I HAVE BEEN CHOSEN BY THIS PEOPLE, AND CONSECRATED BY MY FATHER, AND WAS SUFFERED BY THE HAND OF THE LORD THAT I SHOULD BE A RULER AND A KING OVER THIS PEOPLE; AND HAVE BEEN KEPT AND PRESERVED BY HIS MATCHLESS POWER, TO SERVE YOU WITH ALL THE MIGHT, MIND AND STRENGTH WHICH THE LORD HATH GRANTED UNTO ME" ([MOSIAH 2:10–11](#)).

YOUR LEADER IN THE LORD'S CHURCH MAY SEEM TO YOU WEAK AND HUMAN OR MAY APPEAR TO YOU STRONG AND INSPIRED. THE FACT IS THAT EVERY LEADER IS A MIXTURE OF THOSE TRAITS AND MORE. WHAT HELPS SERVANTS OF THE LORD WHO ARE CALLED TO LEAD US IS WHEN WE CAN SEE THEM AS THE LORD DID WHEN HE CALLED THEM.

THE LORD SEES HIS SERVANTS PERFECTLY. HE SEES THEIR POTENTIAL AND THEIR FUTURE. AND HE KNOWS HOW THEIR VERY NATURE CAN BE CHANGED. HE ALSO KNOWS HOW THEY CAN BE CHANGED BY THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THE PEOPLE THEY WILL LEAD.

YOU MAY HAVE HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING MADE STRONGER BY THE PEOPLE YOU WERE CALLED TO SERVE. I WAS ONCE CALLED AS A BISHOP OF YOUNG SINGLE ADULTS. I AM NOT SURE WHETHER

THE LORD'S PURPOSES WERE MORE FOR WHAT CHANGES I COULD HELP HIM MAKE IN THEM OR THE CHANGES HE KNEW THEY WOULD MAKE IN ME.

TO A DEGREE I DO NOT UNDERSTAND, MOST OF THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THAT WARD ACTED AS IF I WAS CALLED OF GOD ESPECIALLY FOR THEM. THEY SAW MY WEAKNESSES BUT LOOKED PAST THEM.

I REMEMBER ONE YOUNG MAN WHO ASKED FOR COUNSEL ABOUT HIS EDUCATIONAL CHOICES. HE WAS A FRESHMAN AT A VERY GOOD UNIVERSITY. A WEEK AFTER I HAD GIVEN THE ADVICE, HE SCHEDULED AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME.

WHEN HE CAME INTO THE OFFICE, HE SURPRISED ME BY ASKING, "BISHOP, COULD WE PRAY BEFORE WE TALK? AND COULD WE KNEEL? AND MAY I PRAY?"

HIS REQUESTS SURPRISED ME. BUT HIS PRAYER SURPRISED ME EVEN MORE. IT WENT SOMETHING LIKE THIS: "HEAVENLY FATHER, YOU KNOW THAT BISHOP EYRING GAVE ME ADVICE LAST WEEK, AND IT DIDN'T WORK. PLEASE INSPIRE HIM TO KNOW WHAT I AM TO DO NOW."

NOW YOU MIGHT SMILE AT THAT, BUT I DIDN'T. HE ALREADY KNEW WHAT THE LORD WANTED HIM TO DO. BUT HE HONORED THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP IN THE LORD'S CHURCH AND PERHAPS WANTED ME TO HAVE THE CHANCE TO GAIN GREATER CONFIDENCE TO RECEIVE REVELATION IN THAT CALLING.

IT WORKED. AS SOON AS WE STOOD UP AND THEN SAT DOWN, THE REVELATION CAME TO ME. I TOLD HIM WHAT I FELT THE LORD WOULD HAVE HIM DO. HE WAS ONLY 18 YEARS OLD THEN, BUT HE WAS MATURE IN SPIRITUAL YEARS.

HE ALREADY KNEW HE DIDN'T NEED TO GO TO A BISHOP ON SUCH A PROBLEM. BUT HE HAD LEARNED TO SUSTAIN THE LORD'S SERVANT EVEN IN HIS MORTAL WEAKNESSES. HE EVENTUALLY BECAME A STAKE PRESIDENT. HE CARRIED WITH HIM THE LESSON WE LEARNED TOGETHER: IF YOU HAVE FAITH THAT THE LORD LEADS HIS CHURCH THROUGH REVELATION TO THOSE IMPERFECT SERVANTS HE CALLS, THE LORD WILL OPEN THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN TO THEM, AS HE WILL TO YOU.

FROM THAT EXPERIENCE, I CARRIED AWAY THE LESSON THAT THE FAITH OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE, SOMETIMES MORE THAN OUR OWN FAITH, BRINGS US REVELATION IN THE LORD'S SERVICE.

THERE WAS ANOTHER LESSON FOR ME. IF THAT BOY HAD JUDGED ME FOR MY FAILURE TO GIVE HIM GOOD ADVICE THE FIRST TIME, HE NEVER WOULD HAVE COME BACK TO ASK AGAIN. AND SO, BY CHOOSING NOT TO JUDGE ME, HE RECEIVED THE CONFIRMATION HE DESIRED.

YET ANOTHER LESSON FROM THAT EXPERIENCE HAS SERVED ME WELL. AS FAR AS I KNOW, HE NEVER TOLD ANYONE IN THE WARD THAT I HAD NOT GIVEN GOOD COUNSEL AT FIRST. HAD HE DONE THAT, IT MIGHT HAVE REDUCED THE FAITH OF OTHERS IN THE WARD TO TRUST THE BISHOP'S INSPIRATION.

I TRY NOT TO JUDGE SERVANTS OF THE LORD OR TO SPEAK OF THEIR APPARENT WEAKNESSES. AND I TRY TO TEACH THAT BY EXAMPLE TO MY CHILDREN. PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST SHARED A CREDO THAT I AM TRYING TO MAKE MY OWN. I COMMEND IT TO YOU:

"WE ... NEED TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN OUR LOCAL LEADERS, BECAUSE THEY ... HAVE BEEN 'CALLED AND CHOSEN.' EVERY MEMBER OF THIS CHURCH MAY RECEIVE COUNSEL FROM A BISHOP OR A BRANCH PRESIDENT, A STAKE OR A MISSION PRESIDENT, AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH AND HIS ASSOCIATES. NONE OF THESE BRETHREN ASKED FOR HIS CALLING. NONE IS PERFECT. YET THEY ARE THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD, CALLED BY HIM THROUGH THOSE ENTITLED TO INSPIRATION. THOSE CALLED, SUSTAINED, AND SET APART ARE ENTITLED TO OUR SUSTAINING SUPPORT.

"... DISRESPECT FOR ECCLESIASTICAL LEADERS HAS CAUSED MANY TO SUFFER SPIRITUAL WEAKENING AND DOWNFALL. WE SHOULD LOOK PAST ANY PERCEIVED IMPERFECTIONS, WARTS, OR SPOTS OF THE MEN CALLED TO PRESIDE OVER US, AND UPHOLD THE OFFICE WHICH THEY HOLD" (["CALLED AND CHOSEN,"](#) *ENSIGNOR LIAHONA*, NOV. 2005, 54–55).
THAT COUNSEL BLESSES SERVANTS OF GOD UNDER ALL CONDITIONS.

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH, LEADERS CLOSE TO THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH BEGAN TO SPEAK OF HIS FAULTS. EVEN WITH ALL THEY HAD SEEN AND KNEW OF HIS STANDING WITH THE LORD, THEIR SPIRIT OF CRITICISM AND JEALOUSY SPREAD LIKE A PLAGUE. ONE OF THE TWELVE SET FOR US ALL THE STANDARD OF FAITH AND LOYALTY WE MUST HAVE IF WE ARE TO SERVE IN THE LORD'S KINGDOM.

HERE IS THE REPORT: "SEVERAL ELDERS CALLED A MEETING IN THE TEMPLE FOR ALL THOSE WHO CONSIDERED JOSEPH SMITH TO BE A FALLEN PROPHET. THEY INTENDED TO APPOINT DAVID WHITMER AS THE NEW CHURCH LEADER. ... AFTER LISTENING TO THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PROPHET, BRIGHAM [YOUNG] AROSE AND TESTIFIED, 'JOSEPH WAS A PROPHET, AND I KNEW IT, AND THAT THEY MIGHT RAIL AND SLANDER HIM AS MUCH AS THEY PLEASED; THEY COULD NOT DESTROY THE APPOINTMENT OF THE PROPHET OF GOD, THEY COULD ONLY DESTROY THEIR OWN AUTHORITY, CUT THE THREAD THAT BOUND THEM TO THE PROPHET AND TO GOD, AND SINK THEMSELVES TO HELL'" (*CHURCH HISTORY IN THE FULNESS OF TIMES STUDENT MANUAL* [CHURCH EDUCATIONAL

SYSTEM MANUAL, 2003], 2ND ED., 174; SEE ALSO [TEACHINGS OF PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH: BRIGHAM YOUNG](#) [1997], 79).

THERE IS A THREAD THAT BINDS US TO THE LORD IN OUR SERVICE. IT RUNS FROM WHEREVER WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE IN THE KINGDOM, UP THROUGH THOSE CALLED TO PRESIDE OVER US IN THE PRIESTHOOD, AND TO THE PROPHET, WHO IS BOUND TO THE LORD. IT TAKES FAITH AND HUMILITY TO SERVE IN THE PLACE TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED, TO TRUST THAT THE LORD CALLED US AND THOSE WHO PRESIDE OVER US, AND TO SUSTAIN THEM WITH FULL FAITH.

THERE WILL BE TIMES, AS THERE WERE IN THE DAYS OF KIRTLAND, WHEN WE WILL NEED THE FAITH AND THE INTEGRITY OF A BRIGHAM YOUNG TO STAND IN THE PLACE THE LORD HAS CALLED US TO, LOYAL TO HIS PROPHET AND TO THE LEADERS HE HAS PUT IN PLACE.

I BEAR YOU MY SOLEMN AND YET JOYFUL WITNESS THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS AT THE HELM. HE LEADS HIS CHURCH AND HIS SERVANTS. I BEAR WITNESS THAT THOMAS S. MONSON IS THE ONLY MAN WHO HOLDS AND EXERCISES ALL THE KEYS OF THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD ON EARTH AT THIS TIME. AND I PRAY BLESSINGS ON ALL THE HUMBLE SERVANTS WHO SERVE SO WILLINGLY AND WELL IN THE RESTORED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, WHICH HE LEADS PERSONALLY. I TESTIFY THAT JOSEPH SMITH SAW GOD THE FATHER AND JESUS CHRIST. THEY SPOKE TO HIM. THE KEYS OF THE PRIESTHOOD WERE RESTORED FOR THE BLESSING OF ALL OF HEAVENLY FATHER'S CHILDREN. IT IS OUR MISSION AND OUR TRUST TO SERVE IN OUR PLACE IN THE LORD'S CAUSE. IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, AMEN.