

AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

AREA SEVENTY MESSAGE

Ordaining Young Men at the Appropriate Age—Essential for Real Growth

By Elder Taniela Wakolo

The First Presidency has counselled young men, saying, “You live in a day of great opportunities and challenges—a day in which the priesthood has been restored. You have the authority to administer the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood. As you prayerfully and worthily exercise that authority, you will greatly bless the lives of those around you. . . .

“Heavenly Father has great trust and confidence in you and has an important mission for you to fulfill. He will help you as you turn to Him in prayer, listen for the promptings of the Spirit, obey the commandments, and keep the covenants that you have made. You will feel a great sense of accomplishment as you fulfill your duties” (*Fulfilling My Duty to God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders* [booklet, 2010], 5).

I saw this implemented firsthand when as a student, I was blessed to be around a priest as he administered the ordinances

of the Aaronic Priesthood. This was one of the many times I have been taught by the young men of the Church.

Whilst living in New Zealand, I had the privilege of associating with and learning great lessons from individuals, families, and leaders, including Aaronic Priesthood holders. One of those times was when I was presiding in a sacrament meeting. The sacrament was blessed. I realised that a word was not pronounced, and I signalled to have the prayer said again. The second time the same thing happened. I asked that it be done again. The young priest repeated it a third time. After sacrament meeting finished I specifically went to say thank you to this young man for his humility and obedience, and followed up with a phone call to his parents. The following Sunday I attended the same ward and I was anxious to see who was blessing the sacrament. Lo and behold, it was the same priest. He did not falter this



**Elder Taniela
Wakolo**

time, and it was a very reverent blessing. There are many active and worthy priests who belong to this ward, and to see that he had gone through the experience of blessing the bread three times the previous week and still had the courage to stand before the members again to bless the bread the following Sunday was a great lesson of faith, courage and humility. I went to thank his parents after the sacrament for a fine young man who taught me great lessons on those two Sundays. I was quickly reminded of the First Presidency’s promised blessings, to never “shrink with shame” (see Jacob 2:6), and that

“the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel” (D&C 42:12).

In the Pacific Area plan for 2013, which contains the area goals, we are reminded that “our second objective is to ‘strengthen the priesthood.’ We believe that priesthood is ‘strengthened’ by distributing more widely the ‘authority’ of the priesthood as well as increasing the ‘power’ of the priesthood.” Accordingly, in 2013 we continued to work towards increasing “the number of young men ordained to the proper Aaronic priesthood office. . . .

“Increasing the number of Aaronic priesthood holders ordained at the appropriate age is essential to ‘real growth.’ . . . However, only a minority of our young men are ordained to the appropriate Aaronic priesthood office for their age. Surprisingly, far fewer young men are ordained to the appropriate Aaronic priesthood office than are regularly attending their priesthood meetings. . . . [We] need to ordain young men to the appropriate Aaronic priesthood office, as a means of preparing them for Melchizedek priesthood ordination and full-time

missionary service. . . . [We] emphasize that preparation to receive Aaronic priesthood ordination begins for young men in Primary, both in terms of baptizing them . . . at age 8 and in terms of helping more 11-year-old boys prepare for ordination at age 12” (“Pacific Area Annual Plan 2013: Executive Summary,” 6, 7–8).

Where do we begin? We begin where we live and serve, first and foremost within the four walls of our homes.

President Joseph F. Smith taught, “The Holy Priesthood is that authority which God has delegated to man, by which he may speak the will of God as if the angels were here to speak it themselves” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 138).

“The priesthood is the power to act for God and perform his work as though he himself were present. When the Savior commissioned his apostles ‘he gave them power’ (Matthew 10:1) . . . meaning, . . . the priesthood. So recognizable was this power that Simon the sorcerer, who had been baptized but lacked the power to lay on hands, inappropriately offered money to Peter, ‘saying, Give me also

this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 8:19). Peter then gave this . . . rebuke: ‘Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money’ (Acts 8:20)” (Tad R. Callister, *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration* [2006], 293).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland observed, “When that priesthood was gone, not one single, solitary ordinance of the gospel could be efficaciously or redemptively administered, no matter how honest in heart and earnestly seeking those men of all those dispensations were” (“The Restoration” [address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 27, 2002], 4, Church History Library, Salt Lake City).

We are reminded that “no man taketh this honour unto himself” but “a man must be called of God” to receive the priesthood (Hebrews 5:4; Articles of Faith 1:5). The gospel was restored that every man might speak in the name of the Lord (see D&C 1:20). The Lord declared how priesthood power is dispensed: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16).

On the 15th of May, 1829, Joseph Smith and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, in the work of translating the Nephite record, retired to the woods to pray. Their special purpose was to inquire of the Lord concerning the ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins, after finding an account of baptism on the plates. Joseph writes:

“While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

John the Baptist explained that the Aaronic Priesthood did not comprise “the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Joseph Smith—History 1:68–70; see also D&C 13).

President Joseph F. Smith elaborated, “When a man who holds the Priesthood does that which is righteous, God is bound to acknowledge it as though He had done it Himself” (*Teachings: Joseph F. Smith*, 139).

We are teaching the true meaning of real growth, as defined by the Brethren, to our people so that even those who find it hard to memorize will be able to remember and be reminded of its importance. We selected key words from the meaning that will help to ensure that we simplify it without losing the meaning. We eventually came up with the following sentence: “Real growth is when my family and I are truly converted, receive all the saving ordinances, and endure to the end.”

Ordaining young men at the appropriate age is indeed essential to real growth.

Worthiness or righteousness brings power. In the Sermon on the Mount, after being taught the Beatitudes, the disciples and multitude were reminded, “Your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 5:20).

President Monson counselled: “It is up to each of us who hold the priesthood of God to

discipline ourselves so that we stand above the ways of the world. It is essential that we be honorable and decent men. Our actions must be above reproach.

“The words we speak, the way we treat others, and the way we live our lives all impact our effectiveness as men and boys holding the priesthood.

“The gift of the priesthood is priceless. It carries with it the authority to act as God’s servants, to administer to the sick, to bless our families, and to bless others as well. Its authority can reach beyond the veil of death, on into the eternities. There is nothing else to compare with it in all this world. Safeguard it, treasure it, live worthy of it” (“Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 69).

No doubt our young men “live in a day of great opportunities and challenges,” but what a great blessing to understand that the priesthood has been restored and that, once conferred, it gives young men the authority to administer the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood and bless the lives of others. Such is the best way of preparing to serve missions and to prepare for Melchizedek Priesthood service. ■

IMAGE COURTESY OF SEPI HAWAIKIRANGI AND USED WITH PERMISSION



From left to right: Semi Kaufusi, Taniela Tomasi, Sosefo Tomasi, Leli Tuiaki, Salesi Langi, Sonatane Kaufusi

Preparing the Way

By Sepi Hawaikirangi

Sosefo Tomasi is currently attending the Saione Ward in the new Redoubt Stake in South Auckland. After the Saione Ward was created, Sefo attended church a couple of times, but was not consistent.

Last year Brother Semi Kaufusi, second counsellor in the bishopric, proposed to the deacons quorum presidency that there was a need to be

more encouraging towards Sefo, as he was turning 12 in December.

The decision was unanimous that the deacons quorum members all needed to build a relationship with Sefo and solidify a brotherly bond with him. They hoped that it would enable him to attend church more and help him in his transition into the youth programme.

In September 2013 an invitation was issued to Sefo to attend a special fireside.

At the fireside, deacons quorum president Leli

Tuiaki walked into the chapel with a big smile when he saw that Sefo was present at the meeting. He happily reported to Brother Kaufusi that Sefo was there. Leli then took Sefo and together with the other young men they sat as a quorum. Many of them felt the spirit of brotherhood and witnessed the developing bond that took place that evening.

Brother Kaufusi commented, “I felt a warm feeling. I witnessed our deacons quorum presidency rescue one of their own, and in doing so magnify their priesthood keys”. Sefo enjoyed the evening very much.

Recently Sefo’s father has also encouraged him to begin preparing himself to serve a full-time mission. Currently, Sefo and his older brother Taniela Tomasi attend church, youth activities and meetings regularly. This result has come about because of the obedience, good works, and faith of the courageous young men who have followed the admonition of the First Presidency to rescue the one. ■

A Call to Serve

By Nathan Hawkins

I was a newly called deacon, only about 3 months in, when I received a call from my dad telling me that the bishop wanted to see me. The bishop told me that he felt I should be the new deacons quorum president. I gladly accepted this role and I felt honoured. I wanted to serve with all my “heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2), and I felt a great responsibility to look after my deacons. There were only four deacons at this point, including me. Only a few weeks after I was called, our deacons

quorum adviser was released and Brother Stratfold was called to become our adviser.

After attaining a list of all the deacons within my ward boundaries, I visited the less-active deacons in their homes and talked to them. My dad, who was the counsellor in the bishopric responsible for the deacons, and Brother Stratfold transported me around. I gave the boys we visited our Tuesday night Young Men activities schedule for the next 3 months and invited them to come, sharing some experiences that we have had in Young Men. We also invited them to any camps that were coming up. We had some great activities as a quorum, such as going over to Rottnest Island and crabbing in Mandurah, always inviting our less-active members to come. By doing this, we let the boys know that we cared about them. We wanted them to come because we cared about them, and not just so we could tick a box saying that they were active. We met as a deacons quorum and discussed ways to get these boys back.

One young man’s dad told us that he didn’t want us to visit his son anymore. This made me sad, but I respected his wishes, still determined to reactivate others. One young man started to come out to Young Men activities, and through the combined effort of the ward, we managed to bring him and his family back to church. He received the priesthood and advanced to a teacher. It felt good to see this young man embrace the gospel. The ward was also working with a family with two boys who were deacon age, and we started to reach out to them as well. They started coming to Young Men, stake activities, and church, and they continue to do so.

Whenever someone moved up into our quorum we visited them and gave them a *Duty to*

God and For the Strength of Youth booklet. We explained to them the blessings that come from doing your Duty to God, and the responsibilities of being a deacon, talking to them about the importance of the sacrament and about our other duties. The following Sunday we would teach them how to pass the sacrament, and warmly accept them into our quorum.

About 6 months after I was called, Brother Beck,

the Young Men general president, came over to Perth for a fireside. At this fireside he challenged me to double the members of my quorum. We only had 5 boys back then and I was determined to complete the challenge. In my last 5 months of being a deacons quorum president, we had 11 active boys with 2 investigators attending church. The Lord has blessed our quorum, and I have enjoyed being able to serve Him and them. ■

Top, left to right: Josiah Eley, Nathaniel Tata, Nathan Hawkins, Daien Evans, Logan Gray. Bottom, left to right: Kimi Kinikini, Nia Kinikini, Ezi McPhee, Mark Stratfold, Dallin Wood, Tommy Greener



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Experiences with the Aaronic Priesthood

By Naulangi William Vance Sanders Finau

In Primary I prepared for when I would be ordained as a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood.

At the time I was very young, but I learned from my parents and Primary teachers what the priesthood is. I was also taught what would be expected of me as a priesthood holder in honouring my priesthood.

When I was ordained as a deacon, it was one of the most special moments in my life. Being 12 years old and being ordained that very Sunday, I knew a lot was expected of me, especially while attending a non-LDS school. My teachers and parents expected me to be an example and to live the gospel, even when faced with temptations at school and from my peers.

When I was ordained as a teacher on my 14th birthday, I knew I had to step up with my priesthood responsibilities and the Duty to God programme. Fellowshiping my fellow

priesthood holders was a great way for me to learn more about my responsibilities, and helping others to be ordained to their offices in the Aaronic Priesthood was a wonderful way of showing us that more is expected from us.

I was so excited to work in my quorums and fulfil my duties. Attending seminary for the past four years has blessed my life, even though it was hard at times to get up in the mornings.

When I was ordained as a priest, I knew I was preparing for my duties as a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. I was then able to bless the sacrament. I was ordained together with my cousin Siaki Finau. Siaki grew up as a member of the Free Church of Tonga. My paternal grandparents were ministers in the Free Church of Tonga, but after they died, Siaki came to live with us. One day he said to me, “I noticed you’re very happy. Why?” I was grateful that the Spirit was opening Siaki’s heart, so I shared my testimony of the gospel, and he was baptised. Since his conversion to the gospel, Siaki is determined to fulfil his Duty to God, his priesthood responsibilities, and to go and serve a mission, the same goals I have set for myself.

I am forever grateful for the priesthood. I have learned in the six years that I studied in Tonga College that nothing compares to the blessings I have received as a priesthood holder. I have seen it in my academic studies and achievements. Some advice my mother gave me in preparation for my exams was to “live worthy and honour your priesthood, and the Lord will honour His promise.” I have found that to be true every time I seek the Lord’s help in my exams, through studying, prayers, fasting and, most of all, receiving a priesthood blessing. I have been through many challenges at school. I have witnessed my peers cheating during exams. I was very tempted to ignore it, but I remembered that, being a priesthood holder, I had to be accountable, work hard and be honest. Though many students hated me for doing the right thing, I didn’t care because I know that the Lord was with me. My friends at school are not members of the Church, but I have tried to influence them not to smoke and drink, not to run away from school, and to appreciate what their parents sacrifice to educate them.

I also learned as a priesthood holder to be grateful for



everything. Even if my exam results were not good, my mother always reminded me, “Have you done what you’re supposed to do?” meaning, had I thanked God for my results, whether good or bad? I have tried my best to honour my God-given priesthood through all the things I’ve done at home, at school and everywhere I go, by standing as a witness “at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).

As a school prefect, I knew that the whole school was

looking up to me as a student leader. Physical punishment is a common thing at my school, but through the priesthood and the gospel standards, I have learned to influence others through persuasion to change their ways and through my actions, studies, and association with them. When I am with my friends, they always make sure their conversations are clean and their actions are good out of their respect for me.

I will be forever grateful to

the young man Joseph Smith, who kept himself worthy to be given the mighty work of restoring the gospel. I am grateful for my ancestors for finding the true Church and for being faithful, that I may reap what they have sowed in the gospel. I am grateful for the Book of Mormon and for the priesthood.

I hope to continue on living worthy of this holy priesthood and to be worthy of its blessings. I look forward to the day I become a missionary, so I can help spread His word to the world, so they can enjoy the same joy I have. Next year will be my final year in high school. My teachers at school have pushed and persuaded me to apply for a scholarship for further studies, but I have told them that will all have to wait, because I owe the Lord two years of my life.

I am grateful for goodly parents who raised and taught me in the gospel, always reminding me what is expected of me as a son, as a member, as a student, but most of all, as a priesthood holder. I know this is the Lord’s Church and this Church is true, and though I make mistakes and am not perfect, I try my best to live worthy of His priesthood that I hold. ■

Naulangi Finau looks forward to the day he is called to serve a mission for the Church.