Recently, I was privileged to participate in the blessing of one of my grandchildren, and on the same day baptized and confirmed two other grandchildren. As I was standing in the water with my hands positioned to baptize my granddaughter, I had a sudden flash that showed me the privilege that was mine at that moment. I was blessed to be able to help my posterity make her first celestial covenant with our Father in Heaven. Then I was able, as an authorized servant of God, to confirm her membership in the Lord's Church, and bless her through revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost. What a marvel is the priesthood of God.

The uniqueness of priesthood authority

In all the history of the world, how many men have had such a privilege? Until 1830 when the Church of Jesus Christ was once again organized on the earth, only a handful of men have been granted such an opportunity as what I experienced that day. In the October, 2008 General Conference Priesthood Session Richard G. Scott spoke about honoring the priesthood.

> I wonder, brethren, how many of us seriously ponder the inestimable value of holding the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. When we consider how few men who have lived on earth have received the priesthood and how Jesus Christ has empowered those individuals to act in His name, we should feel deeply humble and profoundly grateful for the priesthood we hold (Elder Richard G. Scott, Honor the Priesthood and Use It Well, General Conference Priesthood Session, October 2008).

The priesthood is essential to our salvation. It is through this part of God's power that the covenants and promises that enable salvation to His children are administered. Most of the human family have lived without any exposure to these blessings during their time in mortality. To have these blessings so universally available to us is difficult to fully appreciate. For those of us who were raised in the Church, the priesthood is all around us and is a common part of our lives, but for those who currently live outside the Church, and are without knowledge of the Lord's Church, they may as well live in the Dark Ages for all their opportunities for celestial blessings.

All of us can follow the Savior's example for living. We should each look to Him for how to treat others, and for examples for service and behavior. Just as the women look to the Savior for the example of how to be charitable in their service and love to others, so the men look to the Savior's perfect example for how to serve with selfless compassion in the role of servant. Joseph Fielding Smith said in Chapter 8 of the 2014 Relief Society & Priesthood Manual,

> He chooses men and calls them to be instruments in his hands to accomplish his purposes, and he guides and directs them in their labors. But men are only instruments in the Lord's hands, and the honor and glory for all that his servants accomplish is and should be ascribed unto him forever (Chapter 8: The Church and Kingdom of God, Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith, (2013), 116–26).

Spiritual sensitivity

Perhaps the single greatest challenge for the brethren of the Church is to learn to be more sensitive to the needs of others. Learning to see a need and recognizing it as such is often difficult for men. By nature, women tend to be more gifted in this ability. Men often have to learn how to perceive needs and how to proceed to help with those needs by the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The only way to become more sensitive to those promptings is to become more pure in our nature so we are better able to sense the whisperings that come when opportunities for doing good present themselves.

Elder Richard G. Scott, in that same General Conference talk asked the brethren some detailed questions. The intent of these questions was to help the brethren assess their personal worthiness to have the Spirit with them so they could better serve in their priesthood capacities.

> "... I ask you to ponder your personal worthiness to use the sacred authority you hold. I will also ask you to consider how consistently you use your priesthood to bless others. My intent is not to criticize but to help increase the benefits that flow from your use of the priesthood.
>
> Are your private, personal thoughts conducive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or would they benefit from a thorough housecleaning? Do you nourish your mind with elevating material, or have you succumbed to the enticement of pornographic literature or Web sites? Do you scrupulously avoid the use of stimulants and substances that conflict with the intent of the Word of Wisdom, or have you made some personally rationalized exceptions? Are you most careful to control what enters your mind through your eyes and ears to ensure that it is wholesome and elevating?
>
> If you are divorced, do you provide for the real financial need of the children you have fathered, not just the minimum legal requirement?
>
> If you are married, are you faithful to your wife mentally as well as physically? Are you loyal to your marriage covenants by never engaging in conversation with another woman that you wouldn't want your wife to overhear? Are you kind and supportive of your own wife and children? Do you assist your wife by doing some of the household chores? Do you lead out in family activities such as scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening, or does your wife fill in the gap your lack of attention leaves in the home? Do you tell her you love her?

Even though most of these questions apply equally to women, for the men, these become defining character traits of one who is worthy to be lead by the Holy Spirit in the fulfillment of his priesthood duties. As Elder Scott says, the practice of these behaviors "increase the benefits that flow from [our] use of the priesthood."

The priesthood is a moving target

The priesthood is not a stationary object. Its power comes from activity and action. The more a man avails himself of the opportunities to serve in the capacity of a servant of the Lord, the more the Lord changes the heart of that man. The more a man does to seek the Spirit of revelation in the exercise of his duties in the priesthood, the more the

Lord is able to accomplish good for all of His children through that servant. Whereas women receive all the blessings of the priesthood through their personal worthiness, as well as through the personal ministrations of those who have been given priesthood responsibilities, the men must become Christ-like servants in attitude and in deed in order to receive all the blessings the priesthood has to offer.

Men and women have to earn the Lord's approval by becoming the same kind of person the Savior is, but their paths are slightly different. The result is the same, but the responsibilities are different. Women have the advantage of being naturally more charitable and service oriented than men. Men have been given the responsibility of the priesthood so they can learn to be charitable and service oriented through the responsibilities of being servants of Christ. In the end we all become more Christ-like in our attitudes and behaviors.

As a priesthood holder, I feel the weight of the responsibilities I have been given to be worthy to serve my brothers and sisters in the gospel, and to be prepared to stand in for my Savior and perform the ordinances of salvation and blessing to all of God's children. Even my greatest gift, the eternal union with my wife, I owe to the privilege of having the priesthood in my life.

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The Privilege of Holding the Priesthood