

**Aaronic Priesthood--Scouting Satellite Broadcast**  
**Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.**

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What a great blessing to hear from Bishop Burton. I have taken some notes for my own personal calling, and I hope you have as well.

I have always felt that the best way to strengthen the Melchizedek Priesthood is to begin with the deacons. Now, if President Faust were here, he would say, "It begins earlier than that . . . in the Primary."

And he would be right.

That's why it is so important for each family and every ward to begin preparing young men for the Aaronic Priesthood early, to point them toward the temple and a full-time mission when they are yet young, and to have effective annual priesthood previews, involving both the Primary and the deacons quorum presidencies.

I am grateful to participate in this historic satellite broadcast. So far as I know, this is the first time in the history of the Church that this has ever occurred.

It was just 100 years ago this year that Scouting was born---the child of British general Lord Robert Baden-Powell. Scouting now has over 28,000,000 members worldwide, and this year we will join with Scouts and Scouters from all over the world in England to celebrate 100 years of world Scouting.

It was in 1913 when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints adopted Scouting as a vital activity arm of the Aaronic Priesthood. Since then literally hundreds of thousands of young men---from Cubs to Venturers---from California to Maine, and from Victoria to Halifax---have had their lives changed for good as they have participated in the Scouting program. They have not only learned life skills but have become men of character and integrity.

They have learned the meaning of being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. They have learned to do a good turn daily and to be prepared---all consistent with the teachings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

As a young Cub Scout in Boise, Idaho, I remember the wonderful feeling I had going to den meetings, learning skills, playing games, and---of course---having treats!

It was a grand part of my growing up years. Baden-Powell, in his book *Aids to Scoutmastership*, said, "The whole object of our Scouting is to seize the boy's character in its red-hot stage of enthusiasm, and to weld it into the right shape and to encourage and develop its individuality so that the boy may educate himself to become a good man and [a reliable] citizen for his country."

And much of this is attributable to leaders like you, who have unselfishly helped these

young men of the Aaronic Priesthood reach their potential. And for that we express our heartfelt appreciation for your tireless hours of strengthening the youth of the noble birthright, building the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood, and of service to Scouting.

Thank you for all you do, for all you have done, and thank you in advance for your future service to these great young men.

Throughout the history of our partnership with Scouting, Church leaders have spoken out in support of the positive effect of Scouting in strengthening the Aaronic Priesthood.

President George Albert Smith said: "After many years of close contact with scouting through the National and Local leaders, and with many Scouts of various faiths, I am convinced that participation in this splendid program is one of the most worth-while experiences our boys can have.

"The ideals of scouting, like the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, are intended to make boys better companions, more useful citizens, and happier individuals."

President N. Eldon Tanner, always an ardent supporter of Scouting, said: "The Scout Promise and the Scout Law have meant a great deal to me throughout my life. My grand old Scoutmaster started me out 52 years ago (in 1912) by having me learn and repeat the Scout Promise and the Scout Law, and made it mean something to me. He was an example of the Scout Promise and the Scout Law every step of the way."

And more recently, President Hinckley said, "I love the Scouting movement.

The promise of the Scout Oath and the twelve points of the Scout Law point young men along the path of being prepared for the 21st century.

They provide a solid and powerful magnetic force toward development of a well-rounded and noteworthy character that counts."

Someone asked me recently if I thought that Scouting was as necessary or as relevant today as 100 years ago. I told him that I felt that there has never been a greater need for the youth to acquire the timeless values espoused and taught by Scouting than now. The war between good and evil is raging now as never before. But it is not a war of tanks and guns but of words; of media; of thoughts and feelings; of Internet, cell phones, and earphones; of drugs and drinks that dull the mind and the souls of our youth. And if we as leaders are not valiant, our youth will not be prepared for the challenges that await them.

In years gone by, some youth were able to get by on raw talent and ability. That is no longer the case. If our young men are not men of character and integrity, if they have not learned to work hard and stand on their own two feet, if they have not committed to be finishers in all they do and to make right choices, they will not have sufficient to help them succeed, and they will be left by the wayside.

There is one more thought I have had as I have pondered the value of Scouting in the lives of our boys. We, as a society, are becoming a sedentary people, spending large portions of our lives inside---at desks, talking on telephones, text messaging, in meetings, in classrooms---and never thinking about or appreciating the beauties of nature that

surround us. Our youth spend hour upon hour in front of television screens, computer monitors, and on cell phones, never thinking of the environment around them.

Scouting takes us back to nature, teaches boys to appreciate, cherish, and learn to care for this grand and divine creation, in addition to learning the importance of physical fitness and caring for our physical bodies. That is central in Scouting, as he not only learns these lessons but commits to keep himself "physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

Recently while at a Little Philmont in Hawaii, a recently returned missionary told the story of finishing a discussion with a fisherman in his mission.

The investigator said, "I just caught me fish; do you want some?" The missionaries replied that they did. As he gave them to the senior companion, the investigator asked, "Do you know what to do with these?" The missionary responded: "Of course. I was a Boy Scout and I have the Fishing Merit Badge!" The man gave them the fish and the missionaries hurried home. The senior companion went in to take off his tie before cooking the fish. When he returned to the kitchen, the fish were already in the pan, floured and frying in butter.

"He looked at his companion and said, "*You* know how to do this?" His companion smiled and said, "Yes, I was a Boy Scout too, and I have the Cooking Merit Badge!"

Tonight I would like to focus briefly on two things: first, you---the all-important leaders of youth; and secondly, the great resource of Scouting.

I have found that, for the most part, the success or failure of Scouting in building strong youth is based primarily on us as leaders---not on the boys themselves. One valiant leader can make all the difference in the life of a boy in teaching him character and timeless values that will last a lifetime.

I mention four important characteristics of successful leaders.

#### 1. *Testimony.*

Young men need adult leaders with testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ---leaders who can say, "Come follow me to the temple, or on a mission." These leaders will know just what to say when they have the attention of their youth around a campfire or at another teaching moment.

#### 2. *Training.*

Young men deserve leaders who are trained and who understand how to apply the principles and programs of Scouting to strengthen the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood. Commit now to become trained. This is one of the finest benefits we receive from our partnership with Scouting.

This training can help you understand how Cubbing, Scouting, Varsity, and Venturing help strengthen families by reinforcing family values and providing meaningful, character-building activities.

For me, my Wood Badge experience was life changing and has affected each calling I have had since. With few exceptions, where leaders are well trained and Scouting is strong, so is the Aaronic Priesthood and Duty to God. Your training will also give you an ideal opportunity to become involved with the council and district and rub shoulders with members of other faiths who are devoted youth leaders.

### 3. *Tenure.*

Ideally it would be wonderful to leave leaders of the youth in callings as long as possible, but we recognize that is subject to revelation. Over time, leaders become trained, establish strong Scouting traditions, and build relationships of trust with the boys and their families.

This usually takes years, rather than months.

When considering a possible change for an effective youth leader, you might ask yourself, "Why would we want to release Jim when he has only been serving for several months, has finished basic training, and is having such a profound effect for good in the lives of our young men?" If you ask yourselves that question, you have just opened up the window to inspiration, and the Lord will help you know the answer.

### 4. And finally, *Time.*

It just takes time to be a good youth leader. There is no such thing as one hour on Sunday and one hour during the week in the work of saving and strengthening youth.

Now, brethren, with all this, may I plead with you, as you apply the principles and the program, please do it in a safe manner. Please follow Scouting's safety guides for those activities as noted in the recent notice from Church headquarters.

Make sure an appropriate trip permit is filed before the activity, and ensure that there is sufficient adult supervision---at the very least, two-deep leadership. And as you apply what you have learned, I can promise you a very rewarding and fulfilling experience.

Now let's look at the program and how we apply it to the Aaronic Priesthood. Scouting in both the United States and Canada provides a marvelous resource to help quorums accomplish the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood. Now, brethren, one caution: as you apply the program of Scouting to strengthen Aaronic Priesthood quorums, please do not overlook the benefits of Varsity Scouting and Venturing in the teachers and priests quorums.

At this age, when young men should be increasing their focus on mission preparation, instead they are often sidetracked by girls, cars, jobs, sports, and many other distractions--some good, some not. And often the only response is weekly basketball during mutual. That is not enough to help prepare them to become great missionaries, husbands, and fathers.

Varsity Scouting and Venturing are effective resources to help support the teachers and priests quorums of the Church raise the bar for these great young men of the Aaronic

Priesthood by teaching them timeless values, giving them opportunities to learn and apply leadership skills and develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially---all in a fun and enjoyable setting, planned by the young men themselves, with appropriate adult supervision.

First, the principles. As Bishop Burton appropriately said, "It's all about the priesthood." In all we do, the priesthood and the spiritual growth of our young men must be paramount. We must do nothing that would weaken the integrity of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums. Rather, our charge is to help build faith in each of these young men, to retain them in activity, and to strengthen their families---in a word, to help them come unto Christ.

Scouting is one of the vital tools to help us do just that.

To assist us in that charge, there are eight purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood---all listed in *Duty to God*. Scouting provides an opportunity for young men to apply that which they learn on Sunday.

In a way, it is on-the-job training for life.

A great teacher once said, "The teacher has not taught, until the [learner] has learned"---and changed his life. And so it is with the priesthood.

Our job is not just to present a message on Sunday, but to help our young men apply those lessons in their lives---all with the end in mind.

Let's start with a lesson on Sunday about missionary work. For example, in Book 2 for Aaronic Priesthood Quorum lessons, lesson 23 is on "Practical Preparation for a Mission." That is [Aaronic] Priesthood purpose number five: Prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission. There are many types of activities.

Let's assume that Jake is a member of your quorum and is not active. But in your weekly presidency meeting, you have discovered that Jake likes to camp, hike, and ride bikes. So the quorum presidency decides to plan a cycling and camping activity. Can you imagine a way that cycling can be linked to applying or teaching [Aaronic] Priesthood purpose number five?

Think about how you can connect a cycling activity with preparation for a mission.

You see, the activity didn't begin as a cycling activity. It began with a priesthood purpose. And the same can occur with other activities.

Each activity should have at least one priesthood purpose and use the Boy Scout, Varsity, and Venturing resources for planning helps.

For example, these two manuals are chock full of ideas for fun, character-building activities.

If I were a priests quorums advisor today and was just beginning the program, I would take this manual and divide it in half, giving half to each assistant in the priests quorum,

along with some sticky notes, and ask them to identify activities that they believe the quorum members would enjoy.

And brethren, be sure to take time at the end of each of these activities to tie the activity to the priesthood purpose and discuss the observations of the young men of the quorum.

In a Scout troop, it's called a Scoutmaster's Minute. This is also a great time for you to bear your testimony of the importance of what they have experienced during the activity and how it links to the lesson given on Sunday. And so each activity begins---all with the end in mind---to strengthen each young man, help him to develop faith, and prepare for full-time missionary service.

All we have been talking about today helps us to fulfill the charge of President Hinckley and Elder Ballard to prepare the greatest generation of missionaries this world has ever seen. I don't know any better way to do that than to fully apply all the tools that we have, including Aaronic Priesthood, *Fulfilling Our Duty to God*, and Scouting---Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity, and Venturing.

The *Church Handbook of Instructions* provides guidance for registration of our young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. In *Book 2*, it states:

"Where Scouting is authorized, young men ages 12 through 15 should be registered.

Young men ages 16 and 17 should be registered when they are pursuing rank advancements or when stake presidents and bishops choose to sponsor Venturing Crews . . . for young men of this age. Scout leaders should also be registered.

"If wards choose not to participate in Scouting for priest-age young men, bishops and stake presidents make sure the programs for these young men are well planned, meet spiritual and social needs, and are consistent with the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood." Brethren, in line with this policy, please be certain that your young men are registered with your local Scout organization---active and less active. When I was with President Monson recently, he indicated that "It is the policy of the Church to register our young men with either the Boys Scouts of America or Scouts Canada.

"But it is the charge of the local leaders to claim the blessings of registration by going out and reactivating the less active---and building a program that will attract them."

Then President Monson added, "If I were a Scoutmaster and deacons quorum advisor and had one of my boys who was not active, I would take my senior patrol leader and go to visit that boy and his dad. I would say: 'Billy, we have a great Scout program in our ward. We have campouts, go hiking, swimming, play fun games, and all sorts of other activities.

" 'We invite you to join with us in our activities.

" 'In fact, we want you so bad that we have already paid the registration fees.

" 'We also know that you like to swim and have planned a swimming activity for this week. Can I come and pick you up?' "

And he *will* join---not to become honest, or to become a better citizen, or to learn to work hard, or to serve others. He will join because it sounds fun, and boys like to do fun things. He will also join because he knows that the boys themselves do much of the planning and carrying out of the activities---and he likes to do that. And in the process, he will learn what it means to be "trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind," and to do his duty to God and his country. For he will learn and become a better boy, and in the end, a better man, by doing and by his association with adults who have a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and who stand, with the parents, as righteous role models for these young men. And he will also learn what it means to be part of an Aaronic Priesthood quorum, to serve and bless the lives of others, to hold and magnify the priesthood and to focus on preparation to receive the ordinances of the temple and serve a full-time mission.

I testify to you that this is the work of the Lord. It was inspiration that caused us nearly 100 years ago to enter into this partnership with Scouting to strengthen the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, and it is inspiration today that continues that effort and that partnership. Thank you for your devoted service to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. We express appreciation to you for your vision in helping these young men develop their talents; acquire and apply life skills and timeless values in their lives; prepare for the ordinances of the temple, for missionary work, and for lives of service. We express appreciation and love to your companions and your families for their support in this great work.

May God bless you with inspiration in your calling. May you be committed to become fully trained and understand how Scouting, in all its families, can strengthen the youth of the Aaronic Priesthood and help in this vital effort to retain the active young men, reclaim the less active, and grow the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.