

OBJECTIVE Each young man will better understand the office of a priest and the responsibilities and opportunities associated with that office.

PREPARATION

1. Prayerfully study Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–60; 107:6, 14–15, 20.
2. Materials needed:
 - a. Copies of the standard works (each young man should bring his own).
 - b. Pencils for marking scriptures.

**SUGGESTED
LESSON
DEVELOPMENT**

The Importance of the Office of a Priest

Discussion

- How important is a priest in the Church?
 - What difference would it make if there were no priests in the Church?
- Explain that to Heavenly Father the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood is very important.
- Who is the president of the priests quorum? (The bishop.)
 - What are some of the bishop's duties?

List the young men's responses on the chalkboard. Be sure that they mention that in addition to all his other duties, the bishop is also the president of the priests quorum and the Aaronic Priesthood. The bishop helps prepare the priests to be missionaries and to become Church leaders.

Scripture and discussion

Have a young man read Doctrine and Covenants 107:6, 14–15, 20. Suggest that the young men mark verse 20.

- What does it mean to have “power in administering outward ordinances”?
- In this sense *power* means the right and authority to administer or act. It also implies that the Lord will back up this right and authority with his power. Priesthood bearers are agents of the Lord as they function in the Aaronic Priesthood. When the priests baptize and administer the sacrament, they are helping members to show the outward signs that reflect an inward commitment to live the gospel.

- What does it mean “to hold the keys of the ministering of angels”?

Let them discuss this for a few minutes. Help the young men see that this is a literal promise and that there may be cases when angels minister to them or to others they are serving even though they are not aware of it, nor will they necessarily see the angels.

Story

President Wilford Woodruff experienced the ministering of angels when he was doing missionary work as a priest and was impressed to warn a formerly active Church member named Father Hakeman to repent and become active again.

“I was once moved upon to go and warn old Father Hakeman. . . . He had been in Jackson County during the persecution period. . . . We went a good deal out of our way for the purpose of visiting Father Hakeman. I had a vision the night previous, in which was manifested to me the trouble that lay before us, but that the Lord would deliver us. We arrived at his house on Sunday morning. He was taking breakfast. We had had breakfast at the place where we stayed overnight. I saw a Book of Mormon on his shelf. He did not seem to pay any attention to us, or to take any interest in us. I took up the Book of Mormon, and said, ‘You have a very good book here.’

“ ‘Yes,’ said he, ‘but it is a book that came from the devil.’

“That opened my eyes. He had been an elder; he had been in Zion; had been persecuted there and driven out; but I found that he had apostatized, and he was our enemy. I saw he would do anything he could against us.

“We left him and went to Brother Hubbard’s and stayed with him three weeks, during which we took our axes and cleared some land for him. I was strongly impressed three times to go up and warn Father Hakeman. At last I did so, according to the commandment of God to me. The third time I met with him, his house seemed to be full of evil spirits, and I was troubled in spirit at the manifestation. When I finished my warning, I left him. He followed me from his house with the intention of killing me. I have no doubt about his intention, for it was shown to me in vision. When he came to where I was, he fell dead at my feet, as if he had been struck with a thunderbolt from heaven. I was then a priest, but God defended me and preserved my life. I speak of this because it is a principle that has been manifest in the church of God in this generation as well as in others. I had the administration of angels while holding the office of a priest. I had visions and revelations. I traveled thousand of miles. I baptized men, though I could not confirm them because I had not the authority to do it.

“I speak of these things to show that a man should not be ashamed of any portion of the priesthood. Our young men, if they are deacons, should labor to fulfil that office. If they do that, they may then be called to the office of a teacher, whose duty it is to teach the people, visit the Saints and see that there is no evil or iniquity carried on. God has no respect for persons in this priesthood any further than as they magnify their callings and do their duty” (*Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946], pp. 297–98).

Discussion

Explain that sometimes the Aaronic Priesthood is referred to as the lesser priesthood.

- Why is it called the lesser priesthood? (It has less authority and fewer keys than the Melchizedek Priesthood.)

Help the young men understand that as president of the Aaronic Priesthood in your ward, the bishop is responsible for the temporal affairs of the ward. He is helped by the priests, teachers, and deacons in taking care of the temporal needs of the ward members.

Emphasize that as Aaronic Priesthood holders, they are not just “the boys at the sacrament table” but that they have been ordained and given priesthood authority to administer the sacrament, and, in the case of priests, to baptize. They should also set the example for the other young men of how a priesthood bearer should live.

Testimony

Testify to the young men that they have great power given to them. There is more power associated with the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood than with any earthly office outside the Church, because priesthood power is the power of God.

Scripture and discussion

Have a young man read Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–52. Suggest that the young men mark these verses.

- Is any one of these duties a priest’s most important duty? Why?

Help the young men understand that no duty is more important than another, but that all are important.

Have a young man read Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–60 to learn the duties of teachers and deacons.

- What duties does a teacher have that are the same as the priest?
- How many of the teacher’s duties does the priest have? How many of the deacon’s?
- How long does your ordination last?

Discussion and adviser presentation

Explain that the young men will hold the priesthood as they are worthy to do so. It is taken from them only if they are excommunicated from the Church. As long as they are worthy, they can function as priesthood bearers under the direction of proper authority. Point out that the Aaronic Priesthood is in many ways a learning priesthood. As they get experience in a particular office and grow older, they are ordained to a higher office and gain more experience. They never lose the authority to act in the callings in the Aaronic Priesthood. Remind them that teachers, priests, and even elders may be asked to pass the sacrament

Story

or to collect fast offerings. This is proper, since they are still deacons, even though they have been ordained to higher offices.

Explain that Wilford Woodruff learned further of a priest's authority and opportunities in another experience when he was a priest:

"While at that place [Clay County, Missouri] I had a great desire in my heart to go and preach the gospel. I went off one Sunday night by myself into a hickory grove, several hundred yards from the settlement, and I asked the Lord to open the door for me that I might go and preach the gospel. . . . The Lord answered that prayer, and said I should have my desire granted. I got up rejoicing. I walked about two hundred yards out in the open road; and when I got into the road there stood Judge Higbee. Said he, 'Brother Woodruff, the Lord has revealed to me that it is your duty to be ordained to go and preach the gospel.'

"Said I, 'Has he?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Well,' said I, 'if the Lord wants me to preach the gospel, I am perfectly willing to go and do that.' I did not tell him I had been praying for this.

"The consequence was I attended a council at Lyman Wight's, and was called and ordained to the office of a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, while other brethren were ordained elders. I was called by Bishop Partridge to go to the southern country on a mission. . . . It was then dangerous for any of our brethren to go through Jackson County. [Bishop Partridge] wanted me to go to Arkansas, and the road led square through Jackson County. I asked him if we should go through there.

"Said he, 'If you have got faith to do it, you may. . . .'

" 'Well,' said I, 'the Lord says we must travel without purse or scrip; shall we do it?'

"Said he, 'That is the law of God; if you have faith to do it, you can do it.' . . .

"But I do not want to dwell on these things. I merely wish to say that I went out as a priest, and my companion as an elder, and we traveled thousands of miles, and had many things manifested to us. I desire to impress upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a priest or an apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A priest holds the key of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an apostle, as a seventy, or as an elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office as a priest. The Lord revealed to me by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me" (*Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, pp. 299–300).

Conclusion

Testimony and challenge

Testify that our Father in Heaven will give each worthy young man the privilege of holding the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. He has given this opportunity so that young men may be a vital force in the Church. He has given priests the bishop as their quorum president to be with them and to help their parents to train them for the duties they will perform during their life in the Church.

Point out that the Lord gives them the chance to perform ordinances and to act in major responsibilities. They perform important work in the Church. Aaronic Priesthood holders should understand that when they perform their duties properly, they can influence the lives and goals of many other people.

Challenge the young men to take their ordination to the priesthood seriously by fulfilling every assignment they receive and by setting a proper example at all times.

Quorum activity

Set up a program that will allow all of the quorum members, as much as possible, to do all the things they are commissioned to do. Work with the bishop on this activity. Make sure every quorum member has a chance to do home teaching (if a teacher or priest), to give talks, and to do all the other duties of the Aaronic Priesthood holder. For example, you can give quorum members the opportunity to "preach, teach, expound, exhort" by having them help with part of a quorum lesson. Such involvement will help them gain confidence and will help prepare them for the mission field and for further Church service.