

Father's Day Address

by Bruce T. Forbes

I had originally written an essay titled 'ICE CREAM CONES AND THE PRIESTHOOD', and I used it as a basis for a Father's Day talk I gave in Sacrament Meeting. Here is the Sacrament Meeting version.

Dear Dad:

I spoke in Sacrament Meeting on Father's Day. My Bishop insisted I send you a copy of my talk. Here it is.

Introduction (spoken candidly):

The quote on the cover of our program today is a good one - *"A Father's voice may not be heard around the world; but it will be heard in his home."* But it also bothers me, because of the fact that because it is heard in the home it will be heard around the world. While I was waiting to speak, I listed all the places my father's voice has been heard because it was heard in the home. My father's voice has been heard by members and non-members in: Japan, England, Germany, Turkey, Hawaii, Washington state, Oregon, California, Arizona, Utah, North Dakota, Georgia, Mississippi, and of course here in Illinois. [Since giving this address, one may add: Italy, Israel, Portugal, North Carolina, Maryland, Ohio, Michigan, and Washington D.C.] While in Hawaii, a sister in the ward quoted my father without knowing it - it was such a perfect recitation of the quote that all I could see was my father's face. I confronted her after Sacrament Meeting and asked her - 'where have you known my sister?' (It was a lecture my sister usually received.) She learned it as something my sister often quoted in her Relief Society lessons in her military ward in Germany.

I have always thought there were four Sacrament Meetings in which I would be scared to death to speak: Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day

and Father's Day. I have never felt there was anything of worth that I could contribute. Knowing that I would get up here today of all days and be scared to death, I have done something I have never done before: I have written my talk out. I hope you will forgive me if I read it, but I was guided by the Spirit while preparing it, and I pray that you might feel of that same spirit.

THE TALK (written out beforehand):

Once I began to grow up and see things from somewhat of an adult view, I began to develop a question about Fathers' Day: Are we just honoring the fathers and other great men in our lives? Or are we also celebrating the silent, behind-the scene work of their mothers and wives? Once a boy reaches a certain age, he realizes that he will not attain his greatest goals in life, whether spiritual or temporal, without the aid and support of a good woman. He discovers that there is no way he can effectively carry out his God-given role of providing for his family without a wife who will willingly carry out her role of homemaker to support him. How thankful I am that in today's world we have prophets and other men of God that unashamedly teach God's intended roles for man and women, even though the world tries its best to confuse and merge these roles. How thankful I am that Latter-day Saint women are proud to be called Homemakers and Housewives, even though these roles are degraded by all around them. How thankful I am that Latter-day Saint women realize that by being a back-stage crew as it were to their husbands, they in fact are the driving force behind their man and bring the greater glory upon

themselves and their family. How grateful I am for the words of a recently-written song; a song that truly expresses what good Latter-day Saint men think of their wives:

It must have been cold there in my shadow,
 To never have sunlight on your face.
 You were content to let me shine, That's your way,
 You always walked a step behind.
 So I was the one with all the glory,
 While you were the one with all the strength.
 A beautiful face without a name - for so long
 A beautiful smile to hide the pain.
 Did I ever tell you you're my hero,
 And everything I would like to be?
 I can fly higher than an eagle
 'Cause you are the wind beneath my wings.

It might have appeared to go unnoticed,
 But I've got it all here in my heart.
 I want you to know I know the truth;
 Of course I know it,
 I would be nothing without you.
 Did I ever tell you you're my hero,
 And everything I would like to be?
 I can fly higher than an eagle
 'Cause you are the wind beneath my wings.

Before I leave this subject, I would like to quote from the writings of Benjamin Franklin. He closed his 1748 POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC with this historical observation:

*"Conrad, third emperor of Germany, besieged Guelph, duke of Bavaria, in the city of Warsburg. The women perceiving the town could not hold out, petitioned the emperor that they might depart only with so much as they could carry on their backs; which the emperor condescended to, expecting they would have laden themselves with silver and gold; but they all came forth with every one her husband on her back; whereat the emperor was so moved that he wept, received the duke into his favor, gave all the men their lives, and extolled the women with deserved praises.---
 Quere, Is this story more to the honor of the wives*

or the husbands? My dame Bridget says the first, I think the latter. But we submit our dispute to the decision of the candid reader."

Today I would like to pay tribute to a man very close to me: a man who was so supported and strengthened by a very good woman. To do so, I would like to read something I wrote in tribute of him several years ago.

ICE CREAM CONES AND THE PRIESTHOOD; or, The Way To a Boy's Heart

It was just yesterday that I was driving to the Stake Center all by myself to watch the priesthood session of General Conference - we finally get it on the satellite link. Right on the corner next to the chapel I saw an ice cream parlor, and memories flooded in of so many past Saturdays with my Dad and brothers. After every one of such sessions and after stake priesthood meetings, my Dad would take us all to such a place next to our Stake Center back home for an ice cream cone.

It's not the food part of it that we really remember, although times that Dad could afford to take us out like that were far and few between. It's just that he always taught us it was a joy to magnify the priesthood, and ice cream cones are just the way we remember it.

The first speaker yesterday spoke about priesthood blessings. I thought of all the times my Father's hands were layed upon my head. All too often it was for a blessing of healing and I always knew that if he was going to give me a blessing that I'd get well; there was just no question. Except when he'd bless me with patience - I never did like that. I also remembered as a five or six-year old Dad took me with to give a blessing to a woman in the ward. He always took one his children on such priesthood errands so we could gain such experiences. The sister was so sick she couldn't move without experiencing extreme pain; she couldn't even hold her head up off her pillow for the blessing. After the anointing and blessing were performed, though, she walked Dad and I and the other priesthood holder to the door,

thanking us for coming.

As a newly ordained Melchizedek Priesthood holder, I remember joining my father in giving such blessings and the feeling of oneness between father and son we shared together. These were special moments as mentor taught protégé in the performance of holy things.

Listening to the speaker last night, I also remembered many of the blessings of guidance and comfort my father gave me. Before leaving on my mission he gave me a blessing that, quite honestly, meant more to me and stayed in my mind longer than the one my stake president gave me when setting me apart as a missionary. My stake president, a good and spiritual man of God to be sure, gave a good blessing. But my Father... well, he's my father and gave a father's blessing. While on my mission I asked my mission president for such a blessing and I knew it was a good blessing because he sounded just like my father. Still today I never go to visit my parents without a meeting in private with my father and receiving such a blessing. I picture my father on his deathbed and his children and grandchildren gathered around for a final blessing, just like so many of the biblical patriarchs and their families.

The second speaker yesterday spoke about the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood. I could almost hear my father's voice as he sat sharing so much the same testimony. Right from the moment we started preparing for receiving the priesthood, my father made sure we understood the importance of the Oath and Covenant, even to the point of committing it to memory when we were yet Deacons. Just as the speaker talked about gaining godhood through living up to the Oath and Covenant, so had my father repeatedly taught us that the priesthood was the ruling and operating power in the Celestial Realms and that by magnifying it here on earth we were in fact preparing for future responsibilities in the Eternities.

And did my father magnify his priesthood? I scarce remember a single welfare project or service project that he missed, even if he had to

got off work early. And he never turned someone down when a blessing or just a strong arm was need. He almost always took one of boys along so we could see that he enjoyed serving in a priesthood capacity and the happiness it brought to others. I think it was also to get us used to doing such things. He made us understand through his actions that it was through service to the Lord and to our fellow beings that we magnified the priesthood the LORD had entrusted us with. And an ice cream cone after such events always helped.

"'Priesthood' means 'Service'," my father's voice still echoes in my mind. "There's not a single thing a priesthood holder does for himself..."

"How 'bout racking up blessings for himself?" one of us finally challenged.

"What does the LORD say about gifts given for the wrong reason?" Dad said, returning the challenge.

"A gift given for the same reason is as if the gift wasn't given at all," we recited almost in unison. We should have asked him for a scripture reference - he could barely find the story of the Creation. But that's not to say he didn't know the gospel; he knows it as well as any man alive. He just couldn't always tell you were it's written.

"So; as I said," and he smiled wickedly at us, "'Priesthood' means 'Service'. There's not a single thing a priesthood holder does for himself. Yes, he does receive blessings for magnifying his priesthood, but he receives those blessings by unselfishly helping others with no thought of reward."

Aside from such projects, he taught us, again through his actions, that the family and the church always came first in his life. In fact, he made it clear that a priesthood holder had a bigger responsibility towards his family because he did hold the priesthood. The only time I ever saw him deliberately miss a bishopric meeting was one Saturday when he realized the family hadn't had a chance to do anything together for several months. So he skipped out on a bishopric meeting, two of us ditched a stake dance practice, one a Sunday

School class activity, and the other a church athletic event - and off we went as a family. That evening, when worried calls came to see if our family was still alive (we never missed meetings; another thing Dad taught us), the only explanation my father and the rest of us gave was "I was with my family." When the dance director, Sunday School teacher, and sports director complained about such irresponsibility, we offered to let our dad explain it to them - they all declined; they knew what he'd say.

Monday nights were sacred in our house. The only thing that happened was our family being together. Dad took his patriarchal position seriously and presided over Family Home Evenings with all the stature of the Prophet at General Conference. "When all else in this world fails," I can still hear him say, "the family will still remain. The family is the only thing we can take into Eternity. If we don't have each other, we'll have nothing." Still today the part of Monday nights most of us kids remember are the informal discussions that began to develop during the refreshments (usually ice cream). Sometimes it seemed that we rushed through the lesson so there would be time for the discussion afterwards. All school homework seemed to magically get done before dinner so that there'd be nothing to stop us from sitting down and literally talking about ANYTHING. In the middle of the talk would be my father. He'd be listening and guiding the discussion; making sure gospel truths were being

taught. This was the big time every week that we knew we could talk with Dad about literally anything and that there would be no ridicule and no being laughed at; just straightforward answers and teachings. I still cherish those evenings.

There were many a time that other members of the church thought an activity or even a roadshow practice could be held 'Monday night after Family Home Evening.' Dad would not so patiently explain that Family Home Evening didn't end just because the lesson was over. "Monday night is for the Family; NO ONE ELSE," he'd say. It took several years, but slowly other members slowly realized that our family just didn't do anything else on Monday night.

After the priesthood session yesterday, I stopped for ice cream before going home. Then I called Dad when I got home; I always call after the priesthood session. Mom tells me my brothers call too, and that we all mention ice cream.

"Did you make the session?" he always asks.

"Course I did," I always answer.

"Go for ice cream afterwards?" he always asks. He still does, even though we're all grown up and moved away; he says it helps him remember how much the LORD helped him in raising his children.

When my sons get old enough to go to these meetings we'll go for ice cream afterwards, too. And maybe the LORD will help me raise my boys into good priesthood holders like he did my Dad.