

Utah Layton Priesthood Leadership Conference

1589 E Gentile St., Layton, Utah | February 15, 2014

Presiding: Elder L. Tom Perry, *of the Quorum of the Twelve*
Attending: Elder Richard G. Scott, *of the Quorum of the Twelve*
Elder Don R. Clarke, *of the Seventy*
Elder Gene R. Chidester, *of the Seventy*
President Stephen Hansen, *Utah Salt Lake City Mission*
Participating: Layton Utah Stake
Layton Utah Legacy Stake
Layton Utah South Stake
Layton Utah Valley View Stake
Layton Utah Creekside Stake
Layton Utah Holmes Creek Stake
Layton Utah West Stake
Layton Utah East Stake
Layton Utah Kays Creek Stake
Layton Utah North Stake
Layton Utah Northridge Stake
Layton Utah Layton Hills Stake
Layton Utah YSA Stake

Number Invited: 153
Number Attending: 150
Percent Attending: 98%

Addresses Given:

Elder Don R. Clarke – *Individual conversion through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; The Rising Generation*
Pray to feel the Holy Ghost, which will teach you today. If we get the Holy Ghost right, everything else will fall into line. (Enos 1:1-5) Hear the word of God spoken and written by his servants, let that word sink deep into your heart, hunger for righteousness, obediently follow covenants and ordinances, raise your voice in prayer and supplication, asking in faith to know Jesus is the Christ. Faith is reliance on the Lord. (Story of Amanda Smith and her son Alma Smith) She saw in vision what could happen and she knew the Lord could heal her son's hip. They faithfully obeyed the Lord's instructions.

Bishops should prepare spiritually: in all he does, a bishop is a representative of Jesus Christ. The calling of a bishop is not complex. Acting on promptings quickly will allow you to see miracles. We must turn our passive belief into active faith. What is true conversion? Knowledge must be founded in the heart. Helaman 15:7-8 - Principles of conversion from these verses include being brought to knowledge of truth, being firm and steadfast, and faith unto change. Conversion is a spiritual and moral change. The process is believing, faith, repenting, experiencing a mighty change, conversion. There are individuals who need you. There are sheep everywhere. May The Lord bless us to know what faith can do, not only for us but for those around us. The Lord is real.

Elder Gene R. Chidester – Strengthening Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums and Ward Councils

Faith is acting. Without faith we do not go anywhere, but with faith we have great power. There is great strength and goodness in this group of men present today. (Doc. & Cov. 84:20-21) - Key words: ordinances, power of godliness, authority. Power comes thorough righteousness. Strength of a quorum comes from unity in righteousness. From 1831 until 1839 members were to be focused on becoming sanctified and empowered through ordinances prior to going out and preaching the gospel to the world. (Doc. & Cov. 38:32; 39:15; 43:11, 16) Sanctification or cleansing comes through Jesus Christ. We properly prepare individuals and families for ordinances so they can become sanctified, clean and empowered. We will strengthen our quorums and our ward councils as we prepare people for ordinances.

Elder L. Tom Perry – Improved use of Missionaries to Accomplish the Work of Salvation, Including Activation

Faith is waning in our country. We must arise and strengthen ourselves so that we can strengthen others. People can be so easily swayed today. Our young people are falling into it as well. Our young men are not growing with the same strength. The men are becoming great with the use of their thumbs, but not with their heads. They are the priesthood bearers of the future. It is appalling to see the erosion we have from deacons to teachers, teachers to priests, and priests to elders in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

(Doc. & Cov. 84:33-34) – “become the sons of Moses and of Aaron” is talking about the priesthood.

“The seed of Abraham” – Abraham was promised that his seed “shall be known throughout the earth” and that through the seed of Abraham the Priesthood of God would go forth throughout the earth. Peter is given the power to seal and the keys of the priesthood to act in the stead of Jesus Christ. Thus began the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood after its restoration during the time of Jesus Christ.

You brethren hold the keys. We must be certain that the Priesthood is kept pure, and that young men get the opportunity to be ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood and prepared to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and then go and serve.

We are engaged in a battle to preserve religious freedom in this world. The world looks to the Priesthood and they look to us to step up and fight. It is important that we make this Priesthood a vital part of our young peoples’ lives. The eligible age for young women to serve missions was possibly changed to stimulate the young men in the field to remember who they really are. Mothers are the greatest teachers in the home and always will be. Men have the responsibility of providing and protecting their families. We need to start with those deacons and instill in them a realization that they have something special in them. And then work your way up through the teachers, and priests.

“We expect to see the day...when every council of the Priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will understand its duty, will assume its own responsibility, will magnify its calling, and fill its place in the Church to the uttermost” – Joseph F. Smith, General Conference, April 1906)

Bishop, if the marriages you are working with do not have a moral problem, spread that work out to others in the Priesthood so that you can focus on the youth. Reclaim and safeguard every young man.

Stake presidents, your responsibility is to bring in the prospective elders. The quorum that should be the most active is the Elders Quorum. The church average length of service for an Elders Quorum president is 1.5 years. We cannot have that! Elders Quorum presidents should serve equal to the bishops: five years as a minimum so that they can form continuity and unity in the quorum. Watch very carefully why you are advancing an elder to high priest, unless it is to call them to a calling that requires them to be a high priest. Leave a lot of good leadership in the Elders Quorum. What kind of a man do you call to be on the high council? Trained teachers and leaders. These are the best men you have in the stake. High councilors should know who the less active members are. They should know exactly how many prospective elders there are in the ward to which they are assigned. They should train Elders Quorum presidents to go out and minister in the homes.

Never before in the history of the world have we ever had this many missionaries carrying the gospel forth to the world. The responsibility to keep the full time missionaries busy falls on the wards and stakes. Stake missions were changed to ward missions and councils to bring action to the mission plans. The most important people in the ward council other than the bishop is the Elders Quorum president, High Priest Group leader, and Relief Society president. They are the ones that do the reclaiming – they train those they serve to minister and teach and reclaim. The bishop’s charge is to be certain that these individuals are furnishing names to the full time missionaries of people to assist in reclaiming. Ward mission leaders should be trained and experienced leaders. What a remarkable time it is to hasten the work and build our Heavenly Father’s kingdom here on the earth, first by bringing into activity those who have fallen away. We cannot let these our brethren destroy their salvation by turning away from the covenant of the Priesthood. Make the Priesthood function in the local units, first in the Aaronic priesthood. Melchizedek Priesthood Keys see that prospective elders are reclaimed. Bishops, see that Aaronic Priesthood holders are taught and trained and prepared. Be certain the foundation is strong, vital, alive and full of energy to the uttermost! People will rise up to revere your name for what you have done with your Priesthood Keys.

Elder Richard G. Scott – Strengthening the Family with Particular Focus on Temple Activity

Think about a family or individual who is Luke warm in testimony. Someone who struggles and causes you to be concerned for them. Think of the name of the High Priest Group leader and family history consultant in their ward.

(Doc. & Cov. 110:13-15) Family history consultant could meet with less active families and help them learn something about their own family. Family history work is not just a program, it is core to the plan of salvation. The more we participate in this work the more we will experience the blessings of the work. Youth can be called to help serve as family history consultants. Wouldn't it be great if the youth used their time on their devices researching and preparing names of their own families for temple ordinances rather than playing games? What if the chair in front of the family computer became one of the holy places they have been able to stand in this year? There are two parts of the blessing of family history work: finding the names, and performing the ordinances. The organization of eternity is families. The temple ordinances seal our families together and give us access to all the father has.

Questions and Answers

Q. Can indexing be done via mobile devices or is it still in beta testing?

A. *Elder Scott:* Family history work is important. We need to pray about our participation in family history work.

Elder Clarke: You will find that many family history resources are already available electronically.

Q. How do you help a young man who is struggling to believe in God?

A. *Elder Perry:* The number of Atheists in the country has grown from 7% to 25 % and is growing fast. We must teach the youth the doctrine. They cannot stand up to the truth of the doctrine if they have been taught it effectively. If they will study the doctrine and ask, they can know for themselves.

It is the doctrine that will save them. It is the doctrine that will bring them back. Use those who are around this young man to help reclaim him. You have to be familiar enough with the doctrine yourself to be able to explain it to him.

Elder Clarke: Do not try to compete with activities.

Q. When helping individuals who are struggling with pornography, what aspects of that help can we delegate to others?

A. *Elder Perry:* If you look around the ward you can identify individuals who have had experience helping with these issues. See if you can bring in a person you trust to help you carry on discussion with these struggling individuals. Do not make this a formal calling, but a private discussion. We must seek ways to build armor around us and our people to help safeguard themselves from pornography.

Elder Scott: Identify individuals and prepare them so that when the need comes they can work one on one with individuals who encounter this difficulty. Get individuals who have your highest confidence who can become a type of mentor for the struggling individual.

Elder Clarke: we need to get fathers and mothers to start talking to their kids. The national average age for pornography exposure is 9. These situations are confidential. On a case by case basis these individuals can be assigned to help individuals who are struggling. They must keep confidences.

Elder Chidester: Remember the many resources available through ministering.lds.org

Q. How can a bishop help counsel a couple whose husband is entering a realm of agnosticism?

A. *Elder Perry:* That is a real challenge and thank goodness you are a judge in Israel. This is the most insidious thing that could ever happen. Divorce never solves anything. Do anything you can to save a marriage. Hopefully someone in the quorum can step in and help rescue. This is one great reason we need to build the quorums. An Elders Quorum president and a whole quorum could step in and help in these situations. Also teach in your quorums the importance of honoring women. Get the quorum to make contact with him. He needs to know the full consequences of divorce, supporting his family, his responsibility as a father, and the best interest of the children. Explain the evils of divorce and how they can never be corrected in this life, and perhaps in the life to come.

Q. How do you help a young man or young woman who comes in and says "I think that I'm gay"?

A. *Elder Perry:* Give them association with manly things, strong men that represent the ideal of relationships, a man who is vigorous and knows the power he holds.

Elder Clarke: Teach them the importance of remaining worthy. If they are worthy, they are acceptable before God, and they should be acceptable before you.

Q. How should you address a same-sex couple in a Sacrament Meeting who are showing inappropriate affection?

A. *Elder Perry:* Refer to the Jan 9th letter issued by the Senior Brethren. We do not turn anyone away from Sacrament Meeting, but all are to behave appropriately while there. I would invite them to come into my office right after and let them know how they were out of line. I would let them know that repentance is possible. The scriptures have not changed. Adultery is still adultery. Fornication is still fornication. We should continually warn those living in sin that they are jeopardizing their eternal salvation. Sin is sin.

There is no way they can develop laws which will change the laws of the Lord. We must show them now that we believe in the right type of marriage and use the Proclamation to teach this. This is what we have always believed in. This is what all the prophets and the Savior himself believed in. We must be on the strong side of defending marriage and defending God's plan for His children. This evil will divide our nation in half. We have to be more vigorous. We have to be certain that our legislature protects the Church. You know they [evil] never stop. They move one inch at a time until they have forced upon all. You would be amazed at the network we have among other religious organizations to protect religious freedom. Unfortunately the Supreme Court is listening to the voice of the people through the administration that is currently in place. The individual members of the Church must step up and get involved. It must come from the people, not the general authorities. As local leaders you have a fine line to walk between dictating and teaching the doctrine so that there will be a revival of lay members stepping up to fight for God's cause. So

that people in important positions and courts will see that the majority voice of the people will always be in favor of the Lord. If we do not follow him you can expect calamities to come. He will not let this go forward to destroy the basic family unit He has created for the progression of His children. We have a great responsibility on us and I hope you take it seriously. Teach correct principles and doctrines of what the Lord has established.

Q. How to you handle a temple recommend interview with individuals who claim to support the brethren but the individual is clearly supportive of issues that are against the teachings of the prophet such as same-sex marriage?

A. *Elder Perry:* This is difficult for many people, as they are sympathetic to a loved one who struggles. I do not believe they are born with it. It is a temptation like any other. As long as they keep their support of that loved one within their family, leave it up to them. Elder Tanner taught us how to ask questions in the temple recommend interview. Ask them the questions and if necessary they will incriminate themselves. Put the burden on them. They have to come forward and if we ask the questions the right way I think they will. Say to them "now on this recommend there are three signatures, the first will be yours. As a witness in front of these other witness and God himself, if you feel comfortable putting your name on this recommend then we will join in recommending you as worthy to enter the House of the Lord. The laws of marriage will not change. Homosexual marriages will always be sin in the eyes of the Lord and they will be judged accordingly for living that way.

Q. What are your thoughts on having a family history class in local schools, focused on family history?

A. *Elder Clarke:* That is not a Church decision, but a district decision.

Elder Perry: you are all judges in Israel and you are all different in areas with different needs. You know your stake better than anyone else. Use the spirit of The Lord to guide you and innovate.

Q. From Doctrine & Covenants 121:45-46 what is the definition of the "doctrine of the priesthood" and what is the evidence of that in our lives?

A. *Elder Clarke:* Understand what priesthood keys are and how they function.

Q. What are the issues you see in our specific area and how can we help in that?

A. *Elder Perry:* We are interested in a strong and faithful marriage. A marriage rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a willingness to make whatever sacrifices necessary in their own lives to rear children unto the Lord. This is the only way we will be blessed in the eternities to come.

We care that the Priesthood is in the home. That he is worthy and has the faith to stand before his family and teach and testify to them. We want him worthy so he has confidence to stand before his family and place his hands on their heads.

We are concerned about the youth of the church. We want to help our youth recognize right from wrong and strengthen them to always choose the right. We need to start building in the family, the priesthood quorums, and other organizations to build unity and faith. We need to be concerned about individuals. They can get information (true, or falsified) from any place in the world. If we can get the understanding in their heart and soul that there is a God in heaven and He directs this Church. It is not man made.

Insulate them and indoctrinate them with pure and true and eternal doctrine.

Q. Is there consideration for sisters to enter the temple earlier?

A. *Elder Perry:* Be certain that the sisters are mature enough to understand what they are doing. This is a change in their life that must go on into perpetuity. When the sisters are worthy and desirous we will let

them go, but they need to understand and be ready for those covenants. A mission is a great transition for sisters.

President Hansen: Some of the sisters who go to the temple earlier than marriage, might have their hearts turned toward a mission.

Q. Should we consider moving less active YSA records to the YSA wards?

A. *Elder Perry:* We need to get these young men to seriously consider marriage a lot earlier than they are right now. This needs to be a decision between the individual and the bishop. If it is a person that could be very beneficial to your ward I would encourage them to stay in the ward. There seems to be however a greater possibility to have them reactivated in a YSA unit. If they are lacking in social interaction, I would invite them to join the YSA ward. It has to be a decision between the individual the parent and the bishop. The 18-30 year old group grow faster in the church than any other group, but they are also the most to fall away. We must do all we can to strengthen our organization to unite them.

Closing Testimonies

Elder Gene R. Chidester

Sometimes we live beneath our privileges. The word of God is the way to eternal life and eternal happiness. Jesus Christ's Atonement was a very personal offering for each of us.

Elder Don L. Clarke

The Book of Mormon is the most correct book and we can get closer to God by reading it. We have a prophet of God on earth today. Jesus is the Christ. His life and birth are more important than all other things.

Elder Richard G. Scott

We love you and pray for you. We ask that you be guided in your work. How are you using the scriptures in your meetings? Some of the best meetings I've been in, is when we opened the scriptures and read together and discussed together and were fed by the richness of the doctrine. How are you using the scriptures in your homes? Spend time in your meetings and in your homes nurturing and feeding each other with the power of the word of the Lord. There is power in the word of God.

President Stephen Hansen

If we stand united, we all things can do. This is a sacred season of service.

Elder L. Tom Perry

You have some of the most noble and great callings in the world. You are having occasions now that you will never forget. Don't lose that personal touch that comes through your ministry. Be united. Build the relationship you have one with another. It is wonderful when you counsel together, but even more wonderful when you are on your knees together.

You are a husband and a father. Nothing comes before that calling. That is your first assignment. The way you treat your wife and your family will permeate throughout your stake and ward. When you interview people to call them as bishops, make sure they understand that their wife is the most important calling they have. Find ways to keep your family close.

In your employment you need to be the best example you can possibly be. Show your employer that you have integrity.

Third comes your church calling, which is so vital to your lives. Use your time wisely and balance it well. Learn how to have association with the Lord. Block out time in your busy lives to listen to Him. The Lord will never penetrate your life if you keep yourself so busy you never let Him in. You have to open up time for Him so that he can inspire you in the assignment He has given you. You are called by revelation. Listen to the Lord and let him direct you. We are engaged in the Savior's work. He directs it.

Q&A Luncheon with Stake Presidents

Q. What are some of the problems we are seeing with missionaries and how can we help prepare them?

A. *Elder Clarke:* Gather the parents and tell them they need to teach their children to work. Get bishops to love the kids and be with them, if they do not know or trust their bishop, the youth will rarely visit with them when confession is needed. Have the bishop get frank and ask specific questions to get details now so as to prevent belated confessions. Make sure they are worthy. Sisters need to understand the work required behind a mission. Find any emotional problems early so that they can be worked on over time in preparation for a mission. If they have emotional problems the time to start helping them is years before their mission.

President Hansen: Have priesthood leaders encourage them to mentally leave their toys and devices behind.

Elder Perry: I wish we could get our young men to be more interested in their school work as a preparation for their mission. Ask yourself, "what are we going to do with that full time missionary when he comes home?" Consider telling return missionaries not to change, not to stop carrying his planner around with him, having individual prayers, personal study, companionship study, companionship prayers, etc.

Elder Clarke: Have a high councilor assigned to track a missionary's progress for the first six months they are home. Challenge them to find referrals for the missionaries. Help them build good relationships when they get home. When they come home help them feel like someone. Do not neglect them.

Q. What further direction could you provide us regarding the Melchizedek Priesthood Committee?

A. *Elder Perry:* Each counselor in the stake presidency is assigned to either the Aaronic Priesthood or the Melchizedek Priesthood. They are accountable to report back to the stake president on the happenings and work within that body of the Priesthood. Make counselors and high councilors accountable. The Lord's plan is accountability. Assign high councilors to actively react and prepare individuals for ordinances. Hold them accountable to report back on their efforts.

Q. Is there any talk on security during local church meetings such as Sacrament Meeting?

A. *Elder Perry:* If you feel that you might have a problem, the priesthood should become organized to respond to the situation in an appropriate way.

Q. If we are living below our privileges and do not call upon the powers of heaven to bless someone, can someone pass away if it is not their appointed time?

A. *Elder Perry:* The Lord holds the power over life and death. We can sometimes extend life by living righteously. When asked to give blessings, I have always been prompted to promise comfort and healing unless strongly prompted otherwise.

Elder Scott: We should always listen to the spirit. We can give a blessing of comfort and hope and not necessarily healing. The Lord will guide us as we listen.

Elder Perry: I hope you never go to give a blessing without preparing yourself to have the spirit of the Lord first. Talk to the individual about accepting the blessing. The blessing comes through their faith. You are the instrument pronouncing the blessing.

Elder Scott: We are the mouthpiece. We ought to be careful not to have a prescribed thing to say so that His will can be done and not our preconceived notions.

Closing Remarks

Elder Perry: A stake is structured like general headquarters and everything that happens in that stake is your responsibility. It is a scriptural organization that has been given responsibilities to watch over the saints and to be a refuge for them.