

A PRIESTHOOD STUDY GUIDE

TOPICS:

I. Characteristics and Nature of Priesthood

II. Priesthood Authority

III. Priesthood Authority with Power


IV. Spiritual Authority and Power are Conditional

V. Magnifying Our Calling


*This Study Guides, attempts to reflect in part,
the traditional understanding within the early
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints **(RLDS)**,
and continued within the Restoration Branch Movement **(RBM)**,
concerning the Nature and Authority of Priesthood.*

I. Characteristics and Nature of Priesthood


1. **The Meaning of Priesthood** - [The material in this section is an excerpt from, *The Ministry of the Deacon/Teacher, A Textbook for Priesthood Study*, 1950]

 **Priesthood is authority from God, an endowment of a portion of spiritual power to persuade men to choose godlike ways and purposes.** "Priesthood is but another name for authority and should mean an intervening power—signifies a body of men rightfully holding power to administer in the name of Jesus Christ for the conference of spiritual blessings upon men." —Joseph Smith, *Saints' Herald*, Vol. 24.


It is, "Authority given of God, acknowledged by the people, to act as mediator or minister, for both God and man in their converse with each other..." —C. I. Carpenter, *Church History Quarterly*, Vol. 3, #3, 1929.

 **Priesthood is power from God, entrusted to those men whom he specifically calls and chooses, validated with authority to act for him on the earth.** "Priesthood is the power of God reposed in men whom he chooses and calls into his service, enabling them to minister in the gospel in word and ordinance, and to execute his will in the work of redemption and salvation." —Charles Fry, "Lessons on Priesthood."

"The powers of priesthood ... Are confirmed for no other purpose than the salvation of man, and are continued only in the just exercise of them in the pursuit of this object: hence any act of any man called to this calling, performed with any other intent, or attended with a different result is not authorized of God, and hence does not bind the powers of heaven." —Joseph Smith, III, *The Saints' Herald*, vol. 24, pg.168.

 **Priesthood is the power of life emanating from Christ.** Priesthood sets men apart to become one with Christ in His work.

It is manifest in the new birth by which men come to possess a higher life than they would otherwise possess. Under this power, as one endeavors to-serve, there are times when there is a quickening of the intellect to a perception of divine truth beyond all that is otherwise obtainable by means of the physical senses and ordinary means, increasing knowledge, strengthening intelligence, and leading to sound judgments. It reveals and establishes a standard of righteousness far above that which the human mind, without it, is capable of perceiving. It adds to man's powers of attainment, enabling him to become a son of God, according to the promise of the Scriptures, (Study DC 50:6; 83:8; 90:4)

 **Priesthood is a commission from God that "continueth and abideth forever"** (DC 83: 3; Genesis 6: 7, Inspired Version; John 3:28). *It cannot be assumed, conveyed, controlled nor handled by the will of man.* - Joseph Smith, *Saints' Herald*, Volume 24, pg.168.

It is validated only through ordination directed by God (DC 42:4). It bears fruit and the fruits remain only when the commission is executed with diligence, obedience, and wisdom (John 15:16).

✧ **Priesthood is a sacred trust**, and those accepting it must account' for the manner in which it is used. It is not an earthly honor, for honor's sake, nor a privilege for man's glory (John 7: 18). It is not like an' earthly bequest, controlled and administered for man's selfish interests. Priesthood is the highest conceivable kind of stewardship, involving responsibility to both God and man. (See DC 50: 6.)

"The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven: and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness, that they may be conferred upon us it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, vain ambition, or to exercise dominion or compulsion over the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold the heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, then amen to the priesthood, or to the authority of that man." — Times & Seasons, Vol. 1, pgs. 131-131 as quoted in The Priesthood Journal, July, 1934, pg. 24 under Standards of Priesthood.

✧ **Priesthood is a continuing flow of light and power**, the measure of which at anyone time is determined by the wisdom of God, and the need, the faith, obedience, diligence, & prayers of those directly concerned. (DC 83:3; 92:1-2) Spiritual light and power are always available, like the light of the sun, although it is possible for the minister to allow his capacity for reception to become weak or defective, so that he receives but a small part of it.

✧ **Priesthood is the channel through which flow the blessings of God to man, in all that pertains to his redemption, salvation, and eternal life.**

✧ **Priesthood is a divine principle**, and was set in the plan of salvation to provide guidance for the weak, the young, for those new to the faith and uninformed in the faith. It is to provide leadership for effecting the organization of the body of the church and for directing its affairs. It provides a body of men selected by inspiration and guided by divine direction, from whom the church may select the officers of the organization. It provides, a body of servants of God who may administer the ordinances of the church for the benefit and the' blessing of the people.

✧ **Priesthood implements the love of God**...He designed that men should be made in the beginning in his image (Genesis 1: 27, 29, Inspired Version). Therefore, perfect love is the great purpose and objective for man. It is the purpose of the priesthood, and the means by which it serves God and ministers to men. For men to serve effectively in the priesthood and acceptably to God, calls for the utmost consecration, preparation, self-denial, devotion to duty, and personal sacrifice.

✧ **Priesthood is mostly self-sustaining, but sometimes receives support**, Alma, "commanded them that the priests, whom he had ordained, should labor with their own hands *for their support*." *Mosiah 9:57*

2. Christ, as in all things, is our perfect example. He establishes the pattern.

✚ **Two Different Approaches – Satan’s (Gen. 3:1-2)—Christ’s (Gen. 3:3)**

✚ **Characteristics of Christ’s Nature—Humility, Obedience and Love**

Philippians 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;
I John 3:1 Hereby perceive we the love of Christ, because he laid down his life for us; *John 15:10; John 12:49-50*

✚ **Following Christ’s Example—Characteristics of faithful priesthood involves **humility, obedience and love/charity****

Matthew 26:25 And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall observe to do the things which ye have seen me do, and bear record of me even unto the end.

✚ **Humility Enjoined:** *Acts 20:18-20; I Peter 5:5; DC 18:4b-c; DC 102:3e; DC 133:2a*

Obedience Enjoined: *Romans 1:1, 5; John 15:10*

Love/Charity Enjoined: *I Timothy 4:12; DC 11:4b; DC 16:4d; DC 131:4a*

Joseph Smith Jr - “No power is inherent in priesthood save it be exercised...by persuasion, by longsuffering, by meekness, without hypocrisy, **without guile showing an increase in love, with a soul full of charity towards all men** and when virtue guards the thoughts unceasingly.” Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 1, pgs. 131-132

✚ **Priesthood involves being Bold and Faithful:** *Moroni 8:18; DC 105:7c; DC 29:3c; Alma 21:133-134; Mark 4:31-32*

3. The Nature of Priesthood involves being a faithful and good I. STEWARD, II. SERVANT and III. SHEPHERD

I. Be Ye FAITHFUL AND GOOD STEWARDS of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

✚ All priesthood belongs to God. All priesthood, to function, must be authorized and set apart by God. **He alone is the owner.** Our relationship with Him and his priesthood, is that of being a **Steward**. - *John 15:16*

✚ “The right understanding of this question is this; **priesthood is delegated authority from God**, and is given for a specific purpose, and while men are in the exercise of it within the province of this purpose they are agents for him who has bestowed it; and whenever they transcend the province of that authority they cease to act for God. Nor is it that which is inherent in the man by which everything that he does is qualifiedly of the Lord; and it is only when and so long as men speak with the direct recognition of him who has sent them and within the province of the delegated authority, that they speak as agents for God.” —Saints' Herald. Lamoni, Iowa, July 22, 1893., President Joseph Smith.

✚ **Stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are authorized when they do God’s bidding** *DC 68:1b-1c; 2 Corinthians 3:5-6;*

“When a man acting under divine priesthood speaks and acts in the line of his commission, his words and works are authoritative and are the same force and effect as if Christ himself had spoken and done them. They carry to the hearers the responsibility of heeding and obeying, and they impose upon them the consequences of their decision, whether they accept and obey or disregard and reject; the one to blessing and life, and the other to condemnation and death.” —*The Nature of Priesthood*, Charles Fry, pg. 6

✂ **Stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are accountable - DC 83:6f-h; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2**

“He (Adam) is the head, and was told to multiply. The keys were first given to him and by him to others. **He will have to give an account of his stewardship, and they to him. The priesthood is everlasting.** —*An Exegesis of the Priesthood*, Gomer T Griffiths, Pg 78

✂ **Stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are called according to their gifts and are to magnify and use those gifts for His purposes - 1 Peter 4:10; D&C 16:5c; D&C 17:12a**

“The Spirit divides the gifts unto every man severally as he wills. The Spirit of God, being the mind of God knows just what gift or gifts to give each man. It is desired to impart to each individual and the group some fact, some knowledge and the Lord knows what gift to give and to whom to give it and when, that this knowledge will be imparted in the best way. It is presumed that the gifts are given to the ones who are best prepared to use them. For every gift, we are indebted to our Lord. Our payment must be made in fruits...Like all the gifts of God to man, they are given to use and to be used righteously. An unrighteous use of the gifts cannot produce a righteous fruit. The gifts are given to be used and not to hold passively. Unless used, they will be taken away”
—Albert Carmichael and Elbert A. Smith wrote on page 24, Vol. 6, No. 2, April, 1940 of *The Priesthood Journal*, Use and Abuse of Spiritual Gifts

✂ **Stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are to Learn their Duty and Magnify their Calling - DC 83:6c-d; DC 104:44a**

“Yet, all who will, all who see, **may now prepare themselves.** Blessed are all such as **shall draw close to the Lord in lowliness of heart, in great love, sacrificially, and in great faith.** Such will be pillars of strength to God's people, and they shall be instruments of power in His hands... —*The Endowment* by Earl R. Curry, pp. 6-8

✂ **Stewards of the Gospel have specific callings - DC 70:1a-c**

✂ **Stewards of the Gospel are counted worthy when they diligently perform their duties – DC 104:44a & b**

“Let us not, then, blind ourselves to our own interest and especially to the interests of God's work, but remember that all those who have accepted the honor of the priesthood have also been made partakers of

its responsibilities, and whosoever will not learn his duty and diligently perform the appointed functions shall not be counted worthy to stand.

—*An Exegesis of the Priesthood*, Gomer T Griffiths, Pg 53-54

II. Be Ye FAITHFUL AND GOOD SERVANTS of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Christ's example and expressions on being a Servant - *John 13:3-5, 12-17; Luke 22:24-27; Matthew 20:25-28*

I called you servants for the world's sake, and you are their servants for my sake; —*D&C 90:8b*

I say unto you... that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you, for he that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is least, **and the servant of all**: — *D&C 50:6e*

Examples of what it means to be a Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ


John the Baptist — Favored by the Almighty King to be a chosen servant in his time, recognized that he was a servant of the Lamb of God —*John 3:28-35*

King Benjamin — an example of a Servant Leader - Who being a King, humbled himself and was a servant of his people, and the people of the Almighty King—*Mosiah 1:38-51*

Ammon — consider what he accomplished as a servant: *Alma 12:28-180*

Alma 12:36 But Ammon said unto him, Nay, but I will be thy servant; therefore Ammon humbled himself and became a servant to King Lamoni—and as the King's servant, and a servant of God, the Almighty King—he was able to serve both.

Paul — recognized that he was called to be a servant of God to serve God's people, and what that meant. *Romans 1:1; Titus 1:1; 2 Timothy 2:1-15*

 **Who then is that faithful and wise servant? Who is the unfaithful and foolish servant?** *Luke 12: 40-57; Matthew 25:24-31; DC 60:1-3; 116:2*

 **Promises to the Faithful and Good Servant**

DC 68:1b-d; Isaiah 41:10; John 14:16-18; Alma 16:118-119

III. Be Ye FAITHFUL AND GOOD SHEPHERDS of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

 **Jesus is the Compassionate Shepherd** — *Mark 6:35*

 **Christ is the Good Shepherd** — *John 19:10-17*

 **Christ is the Door to the Sheepfold (Salvation)** — *John 10:1-9*

 **We Are Called to Be Co-Shepherds/Co-Laborers** — *Matthew 9:41-44*

✚ **Central purpose of Priesthood? Feed My Sheep – John 21:15-17; D&C 105:61**

✚ **Shepherds protect the flock – Acts 20:28-30**

✚ **Christ is the Chief Shepherd and Lord - His Servants are Shepherds, not Lords, who serve under Him**

1 Peter 5:1-4 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;

- a. Feed the flock of God which is among you,
- b. taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly;
- c. not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
- d. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, **ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.**

✚ **A healthy flock starts with healthy sheep - A good shepherd:**

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| - sees that they are fed and cared for | - drives out danger when it enters the flock |
| - sees that they are safe | - cares for each sheep |
| - sees that they feel assured | - calls them by their names |
| - sees that they remain healthy | - knows their strength and weaknesses |
| | - encourages each to grow |

✚ **Two Shepherds – Two Folds - Alma 3:62-70 - Christ's and the Devils**

✚ **Unfaithful Shepherds - Ezekiel 34:1-8 God's Response to the Shepherds - 34:9 God Is the Good Shepherd - 34:11-16**

4. Your Priesthood Calling is a great responsibility and privilege

✚ “There is no greater treasure than that the intelligence, power, and glory of God should be put in the hands of men to use in the performance of his work. There is no greater honor than to be called a servant of Jesus Christ, to work with him and he with you, and to share with him the glory of achievement in the salvation of the human race. The greatest honors bestowed by kings and rulers are not to be compared with those so graciously given of Jesus Christ to such as wholeheartedly respond to his call and offer themselves in faithful and loyal service. Their joy does not fade with this life but is extended and magnified in the everlasting kingdom of God.” *The Nature of Priesthood*, Charles Fry, pg.66.

II. Priesthood Authority

1. Priesthood Belongs to God—All Christian Ministry Must Be Authorized if it is to Be Effective.

✚ **God Ordains and Confers Authority—Not Man** - *Romans 13:1; John 3:28; Mosiah 11:118;*

✚ *“DELEGATED AUTHORITY. The right understanding of this question is this; priesthood is delegated authority from God, and is given for a specific purpose, and while men are in the exercise of it within the province of this purpose they are agents for him who has bestowed it; and whenever they transcend the province of that authority they cease to act for God. Nor is it that which is inherent in the man by which everything that he does is qualifiedly of the Lord; and it is only when and so long as men speak with the direct recognition of him who has sent them and within the province of the delegated authority, that they speak as agents for God.”* —The Saints' Herald. Lamoni, Iowa, July 22, 1893. Address to the Priesthood, Joseph Smith III.

2. God's Authority Is Necessary

✚ Many churches have been started by sincere men, but good intentions are not the same as God's calling. Jesus built His church through God's authority, not human tradition. Real ministry must be based on God calling a person, not just personal desire or education. From scripture, it is clear that Christ will build his Church, (Matthew 16:18), and that He is the foundation on which it is built. (1 Corinthians 3:10-11)

3. Authority is Not Universal for All Ministers

✚ Jesus always traced His authority to God:


- *John 6:38* – “For I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.”
- *John 12:49* – “I have not spoken of myself; but the Father...gave me a commandment what I should say.”
- *Matthew 28:18–19* – “All power is given unto me...Go ye therefore and teach all nations...”

✚ Authority differs based on whether ministers are called and authorized by God. Only those personally called and directed by God can rightly act in His name. Not all ministers are equal in God's eyes; true authority comes from God, not human traditions. Jesus made this clear:



- *Luke 20:2–4* – “By what authority doest thou these things?”
- *John 3:5* – Baptism must come from God's authority.
- *1 Corinthians 14:33* – God is not the author of confusion; valid ordinances require proper authority.

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4. Why Authority Matters

-  Ministers handle souls, guide salvation, and perform saving ordinances: baptism, confirmation, blessing of children, Lord's Supper, ordination. Authority is essential because ministers affect eternal life through the ordinances they perform. Only those called by God can "bind on earth" and be recognized in heaven. Some scriptures to consider:
- *John 3:5* – "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
 - *Matthew 16:24* – Followers must obey Christ, not just profess faith.
 - *James 2:17* – Faith without works is dead.


5. Priesthood Call & Ordination: The means by which **Authority** is conferred.

-  **Christ was called and set apart to the Holy Priesthood after the Order of The Son of God** *Hebrews 5:4-6*
-  **Christ called, and ordained the twelve after seeking council with God** - *Luke 6:12-13; Mark 3:13; John 17:18*
- *Mosiah 11:18...none received authority to preach or teach except it were by him (Alma) from God.*

6. Ordination Confers the Right to Act

-  *The primary value of ordination is that it makes clear that the authority of the minister is not his own. This authority comes to him from above. After he has been set apart, then in a very special sense he is no more his own man. — F. Henry Edwards, Authority and Spiritual Power, pg. 23*
-  *"Whenever an individual is **called of God**, as a matter of course he feels that he is authorized to teach, but it must needs be that there shall be **recognition of this right to teach**, and the **church is that which as the human representative of the voice of God** by which the **authority is recognized** and the **right to act in it is sanctioned**... by the imposition of the hands of the church, and in the name of Christ... is the **right to act for the church conferred** upon the individual who is called of God. And they are not qualified by the laying on of hands alone; it is but the outward form of choosing, a **recognition of that which is within them by virtue of the calling of God** unto them and his gifts to them, for which they must **answer unto God alone** in the day of judgment. The church confers the right to act in the name of the church... and it can take this right from a man, but it can never **absolve him from his obligation to God** for that which God has bestowed upon him; for that he must answer before the court of heaven. —Address to the Priesthood, by President Joseph Smith III (General Conference, Lamoni, Iowa, April 14, 1893).*

7. Some denominations say there is no need for "Ordination." If this is true — Why Did Christ Ordain the Twelve?

-  *"They were chosen, named, and ordained apostles. Why ordain them? Why not send them without an ordination? Ordination is the conferring of*

authority upon an individual that he may properly perform the duties upon which he is sent. Could the apostles have accomplished the errand upon which they were sent, or even have been sent, without an ordination? If so, why ordain them? Why go through a useless and dead form? **To argue that the apostles could have been sent as competent ministers without an ordination, is to charge Jesus with performing a work of no validity, a sham. None knew better than he what was necessary...** 'Jesus said, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them." [John xvii.18.] His Father sent him into the world holding the Melchisedec priesthood. The apostles, to be sent like him, must have received a like authority or priesthood." **Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley**

8. The process of conferring priesthood authority involves 3 parties.

a) Authority to act comes from God through authorized representatives of His Church

- **John 15:16** Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, . . .
- **D&C 68:1f** Go ye into all the world; preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;
- **D&C 17:12b** and he is to be ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost which is in the one who ordains him.
- **D&C 42:4** Again I say unto you that it shall not be given to anyone to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority, and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.
- **Matthew 3:34** Why is it that ye receive not the preaching of him whom God has sent?" See also Mosiah 5:43

b) Authority has to be accepted and embraced by the man called

- **D&C 63:15a** And again, verily I say unto you, Those who desire in their hearts, in meekness, to warn sinners to repentance, let them be ordained unto this power; for this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words
- **Alma 8:8** Nevertheless, I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; Therefore, I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know [Amulek]

c) Authority has to be accepted by the people, by the Church

- **D&C 17:16a** No person is to be ordained to any office in this church, where there is a regularly organized branch of the same, without the vote of that church;

- **D&C 125:14c** *If my people will respect the officers whom I have called and set in the church, I will respect these officers; and if they do not, they cannot expect the riches of gifts and the blessings of direction.*

9. Viewpoints on Priesthood Authority:

- ✚ **Jesus rejected the authority claims of Jewish sects** (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes). “I will build my church...” — Matthew 16:18. **Christ is the only foundation.** “Other foundation can no man lay...” — 1 Corinthians 3:11.
- ✚ All denominations must determine whether their foundations rest on God’s authority or human tradition.
 - Traditional Christian View (Succession through Peter):** Authority traced back through an unbroken line to Christ.
 - Professional Ministry View:** Ministry as a profession requiring talent, training, and willingness—not divine calling.
 - Restoration View (Held by RLDS/Restoration Branch tradition):** Presupposes an ancient apostasy; Asserts that the Reformation did not restore lost authority; & Requires divine restoration from heaven.

10. The Loss of True Authority (Apostasy)

- ✚ Most Christian churches accept Christ as foundation, yet deny ongoing revelation or prophetic calling. Many churches believe God stopped speaking after the apostles. The loss of prophetic voice meant loss of the means by which God calls ministers. The Bible warned that people would depart from the faith. Without revelation, the Church lost the way God called and ordained ministers.
- ✚ The Bible predicted a falling away from true authority.
 - “A falling away first” — 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3
 - “Some shall depart from the faith” — 1 Timothy 4:1
- ✚ If the early church fell away from divine guidance, priesthood authority needed restoration.

11. The Restoration of Authority

- ✚ Revelation promised a future heavenly intervention to restore truth and authority (Revelation 4:1). This restoration is claimed to have occurred in 1830 through angelic ministration—(“Another angel... having the everlasting gospel” — Revelation 14:6–7) and brought back divine authority lost through apostasy.

12. Restoration of Authority (Not Succession)

- ✚ The RLDS/RBM tradition claims authority through restoration, not mere succession. In a vision in 1820, the prophet Joseph Smith Jr. was commanded not to join existing churches. Through him, Christ’s Church was restored in these the Latter Days, as well as priesthood authority. Joseph Smith and one other received priesthood authority from heavenly messengers, restoring God’s pattern for the authorizing of His priesthood.

III. Priesthood Authority with Power

1. Authority WITH Power

✚ **By What Authority? *Matthew 21:21*** ...by what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?

John 7:16-17 Jesus said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me...

Mosiah 9:51 ...Alma, having authority from God, ordained priests;

✚ **Christ Has Both Authority and Power:** “Jesus demonstrated his calling by the exercise of spiritual power.”⁵ ***Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956***

Mark 1:20 And they were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. ***Luke 4:32*** And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his words were with power.

✚ **If Christ needed and has both Authority and Power – It follows that we need both as well (*John:5:26-27; Mosiah 9:51*)**

Alma 3:3 ...having power and authority from God to do these things...; Alma consecrated his son Alma to be a High Priest

2. Two types of “Authority” — **POSITIONAL** and **FUNCTIONAL** — both are required to serve and offer effective ministry

3. **POSITIONAL AUTHORITY** – Having a Commission—A Person has the **RIGHT, the Authority & Power to Act** by virtue of holding a **Position**.

Usually conferred by another, but may be assumed by someone. It usually involves the act of being “authorized”

4. **Priesthood Represents a Unique Type of Positional Authority— *John 3:28* A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.—*Romans 13:1* Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power in the church but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.**

✚ So, what is the unique providence of priesthood authority? “*The right understanding of this question is this; **priesthood is delegated authority from God**, and is **given for a specific purpose**, and while men are in the exercise of it within the province of this purpose, they are **agents for him who has bestowed it**; and whenever they transcend the province of that authority they cease to act for God. Nor is it that which is inherent in the man by which everything that he does is qualifiedly of the Lord; and it is only when and so long as men speak with the direct recognition of him who has sent them and within the province of the delegated authority, that they speak as agents for God.*” President Joseph Smith III. Supplement to *The Saints' Herald*. Lamoni, Iowa, July 22, 1893.

5. **Example of Priesthood Positional Authority—Aaron’s Call—*Exodus 28:1* And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office,—*Exodus***

40:13 And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.—**Numbers 18:7** Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve; I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift;

6. Numbers 18:7 and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Consider the examples of Korah, Dathan, Abiram the 250 princess, the Beth-shemites, Uzzah, Uzziah or Saul who sought to function without authority from God.

“No one can rightly assume to act in the offices of the priesthood until he is duly appointed by the great Author of the institution, and complies perfectly with the laws and usages governing such appointments” —**Presidency and Priesthood, Kelly, page 2**

7. “Authority” and “Keys” are often interchanged—Doctrine & Covenants

104:8c The bishopric is the presidency of this priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same. No man has a legal right to this office, to hold the keys of this priesthood, except he be a literal descendant of Aaron.

8. Being “Commissioned”—having “Positional Authority” is Not Enough—

Matthew 17:19-21 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, **Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief;** for, verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith as as grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. **Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.**



“A minister must be properly commissioned. But, if he is to minister effectively, he must also be an informed and good and wise and humble man. His ministry must have ‘moral weightiness.’”

“The ministry of Jesus gives us the supreme example of this moral weightiness. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that the chief priests and elders came into the temple as Jesus was teaching and asked: “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”¹⁵ They had legitimate concern about the legal status of the Master. They wanted to know who vouched for him. But the common people went to the heart of the matter when they commented among themselves that “He taught them as one having authority, not as the scribes.”¹⁶ His message carried conviction. It was, in fact, “the power of God unto salvation.”¹⁷ “Never man spake like this man.”¹⁸ Dr. George A. Buttrick says that Jesus had an authority born of meditation and of love and of life and of the power of God.”¹⁹ **“Source: Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956**

9. Three important meanings of “Authority” - the right to act, the right to govern, and the right to be heard.

- 1) *“Authority in the sense of **the right to act** is of the type involved in performing a marriage ceremony, signing a legal document, or officiating at a baptism. This kind of authority depends primarily on the commission of the one acting. If his commission is not valid beyond all doubt, his right to act is in question.”*
- 2) *“Authority **to direct or to govern** is of the legal type possessed by the governor of a state, or the captain of a ship; or of the administrative type possessed by an apostle, stake president, or district president. This authority depends partly on commission and partly on ability. Those exercising it must have a clear right to do so. They must also have at least the minimum requirements in knowledge, training, experience, insight, and power demanded by their tasks.”*
- 3) *“Authority in the sense of **the right to proclaim and to be listened to** is the authority of the prophet, the doctor, and the teacher. We recognize it when we say that Dr. Jones is an authority, and mean that he knows what he is talking about in his field. His authority comes from his training, experience, and judgment. It arises from what he knows, what he is, and what he can do. Yet even here, where personal qualities are of primary importance, the commission is significant. It is a mark of official recognition and acceptance.” **Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956***

10. FUNCTIONAL AUTHORITY—Positional Authority with Power—Functional authority involves having the ABILITY to act.

11. Examples of Priesthood Functional Authority—I Corinthians 2:4 *My preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of Power—Acts 6:8* *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people—Mormon 4:30* *And he knoweth their faith, for in His name could they remove mountains, and in His name could they cause the earth to shake, and by the power of His word did they cause prisons to tumble to the earth—Moroni 7:35* [Christ said] *If ye will have faith in me, ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.*

12. “It is of the nature of authority that it shall be demonstrated in power.”



“In the field of religion, spiritual power is the clear and final evidence of divine commission. We may accept the authority of the minister officiating in the ordinances of the church on the basis of his commission. But if no spiritual gains accrue from obedience to the ordinances which he administers, then we lose confidence in both the minister and the ordinances. More dearly, perhaps, we tend to accept on the basis of their ordination those who are to direct the affairs of branches or districts. But

after a time we reject and replace those whose record shows no evidence of power in action. And, to carry the principle yet further, we know in our hearts that the heralds of light and truth must demonstrate their calling. Their good news must be proclaimed with power, and in the Holy Ghost, and with heaven-sent assurance.” *Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956*

13. ***“It is thus that his authority becomes real and effective...***

“Priesthood relation established between Christ and the priest by ordination, as symbolized by the vine and its branches, carries authority to officiate in whatever work the Lord requires, according to the light and power the Lord supplies. Under the priesthood the Lord is obligated to give this light and power, or other needful blessing, subject to the servant’s worthiness; and the servant or priest has need to hold himself receptive and worthy, as also to wisely use such blessings when given. **It is thus that his authority becomes real and effective” ...“When a man acting under divine priesthood speaks and acts in the line of his commission,** his words and works are authoritative and are the same force and effect as if Christ himself had spoken and done them. They carry to the hearers the responsibility of heeding and obeying, and they impose upon them the consequences of their decision, whether they accept and obey or disregard and reject; the one to blessing and life, and the other to condemnation and death.” *The Nature of Priesthood, Charles Fry, pg. 6*

14. **When priesthood authority isn’t there, the work of the Gospel is frustrated—**
Mosiah 9:176 King Limhi and many of his people were desirous to be baptized, but **there was none in the land that had authority from God. *Doctrine and Covenants 83:3c*** Therefore, in the ordinances thereof the power of godliness is manifest; **and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;** for without this, no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

15. **Spiritual Authority With Power**

✍ “In similar fashion, in the early days of the Restoration and of the Reorganization, the divine calling of the elders was demonstrated in their evident spiritual authority. This is what commended them to their generation, and to each other. They had moral authority derived from their persistent study of the Scriptures, their sacrificial devotion, and their pioneering spirit. But the necessary plus element, the thing that commended them, was their evident spiritual effectiveness. The Lord confirmed the work with signs following. They were men of authority because they were men of spiritual power.” *Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956*

IV. Spiritual Authority and Power are Conditional

1. **The authority and power of priesthood are directly associated with our righteousness, and the just exercise of our callings.**

✚ "The powers of priesthood ... **Are conferred for no other purpose than the salvation of man, and are continued only in the just exercise of them in the pursuit of this object:** hence any act of any man called to this calling, performed with any other intent, or attended with a different result is not authorized of God, and hence does not bind the powers of heaven." - J. Smith, III, *The Saints' Herald*, vol. 24, pg.168.

2. **Authority can be lost**

✚ "Saul was lawfully anointed as Israel's first king and given authority of God to rule over her. Because Saul also sought to act in a sacred office to which he had never been called, God took the kingdom away from Saul and bestowed it upon David. Because of his disobedience, Saul also forfeited his life. *1 Samuel 13*" *Presidency and Priesthood*, Kelly

3. **Priesthood Authority is limited/defined**—D&C 104:44a...*let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.*—D&C 17:12a *Every elder, priest, teacher, or deacon, is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him;*

4. **Priesthood Hypocrisy & Priestcraft** - D&C 50:2-2; 2 Nephi 11:106

✚ Involves accepting a "Call" but doing nothing with it, or doing something with it that is not of God, or doing something which appears to be good but isn't, or doing something for personal gain or promotion.

✚ "*The powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness, that they may be conferred upon us, it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, vain ambitions, or to exercise dominion or compulsion over the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness; behold the heavens withdraw themselves, and the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, then amen to the priesthood, or to the authority of that man; behold ere he is aware, he is left to kick against the pricks; to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God.*" —Joseph Smith, Jr., *Times and Seasons*, Vol.1, Pgs. 131-132.

5. **Priesthood Authority Not to Be Taken Lightly** – **D&C 60:1b** ...for they will not open their mouths, but hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man.

6. **Authority Not Properly Maintained—Can Be Suspended or Lost**

✚ D&C 43:3c Inasmuch as ye do it not, it shall be taken; even that which ye have received. (See also: D&C 34:4f; D&C 60:2a)

✚ "*If the army of elders composing the priesthood have ever forgotten that they are men chosen for the accomplishment of a specific ensign had in*

view by Him who called them, *that this calling gave no authority, and conferred no dignity not found in direct accord with the design, then has that army become deficient in the principal aid to their success; and every portion of it that persists in thus forgetting what they should certainly remember, disgraces this calling, and should be discharged from service.*

7. Use and Abuse of Authority & Power

✚ “ . . . The rights of the priesthood are inseparably **Joseph Smith, III, *The Priesthood Journal*, Vol. 9, October 1943, No. 4, page 13**connected with the powers of heaven: and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness, that they may be conferred upon us it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, vain ambition, or to exercise dominion or compulsion over the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, **behold the heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, then amen to the priesthood, or to the authority of that man.**”
— Joseph Smith Jr. - *Times & Seasons*, Vol. 1, pgs. 131-131 July, 1934.

8. Consequences of Breaking Our Priesthood Covenant

✚ D&C 83:6f-h - *all those who receive the priesthood receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which **he cannot break**, neither can it be moved; but whoso breaketh this covenant, after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.* Also: D&C 58:6i

9. “Priesthood Accountability”

✚ D&C 118:4c [*...Let no one deceive himself that he shall not account for his stewardship unto Me.*] is often misinterpreted as being applicable to temporal stewardship, but Joseph Smith, III in *The Saints Herald* of July 24, 1937 makes it plain that this is not the case. Speaking concerning this paragraph of Section 118, President Smith said: **“When priesthood is conferred upon anyone who is called, the ordination places a responsibility upon him for which he must answer directly to God.”** *The Nature and Stewardship of Priesthood* by Robert Giertz –March 4, 2004

10. The Conditions of Authority [The following is an excerpt from, *The Ministry of the Deacon/Teacher, A Textbook for Priesthood Study*, 1950]

✚ **Its requisites.** The proper use of authority requires an unswerving devotion to the divine purposes. It requires sustained righteousness as an established way of living in the minister. The minister must comply with the law in his own life. He must have a deep sense of fellowship and of the bond of a common cause and purpose with his fellow ministers. In the life of the true minister, there can be no room for envy, belittlement, scorn, jealousy, or disdain of others. The minister must deserve the support of the membership of the church. He cannot demand it as a right.

It must be freely and willing given. By the quality of his life, too, he must win the respect and high regard of nonmember friends and neighbors who are potentially building material for the kingdom of God.



Its controls and limitations. In the nature of things, the exercise of authority must be related to the needs of the people...It is the first obligation of leadership to serve.

Authority, too, is limited by a man's inherent character and developed qualities, his intelligence, education, personality, public relations adeptness, and devotion to Christ. It is subject to the consent and support of the membership as a body, for priesthood represents the church as well as representing God.



Its training. Special training is needed for church work, because it involves a special type of human and social relationships and definite objectives of attainment for which they are to work. This special training must usually come in addition to regular education in cultural and religious subjects.



Its competency and Spirit. Bishop J. A. Koehler writes, "*Divine authority is competency to speak and act for God.*"

"No power is inherent in priesthood save it be exercised by persuasion; by longsuffering, by meekness, by love unfeigned, without hypocrisy, without guile, showing increase in love with a soul full of charity towards all men and when virtue guards the thoughts unceasingly." — Joseph Smith, Times and Seasons, Vol. I, pgs. 131-132.

The authority of the priesthood of the church should be based upon righteousness, sincerity, devotion, clear vision, wisdom, competency, sound judgment, and wise and just administration of the affairs of the kingdom of God.



Its limitations. Ordination cannot, of itself, qualify a man to act with authority as a minister. It does not remedy defects of character nor remove the effects of an undisciplined life. Ordination is no substitute for education and training. Ordination does not give one the privilege of acting independently of the authority of the church and its higher administrative officers.

Priesthood authority provides "*no power to contravene laws given for the good of all*" the people. It gives no power to place in jeopardy the lives and liberties of the people. It carries no unchallenged guarantee that all acts performed reflect the light of divine wisdom. It conveys no personal prerogatives or prerequisites for the individual member of the priesthood. "*No authority, no dignity not in: accord with God's design.*"

—Joseph Smith III, Saints' Herald, Vol. 24, page 168.

v. Magnifying Our Calling

1. **Magnify Your Calling —*Doctrine & Covenants 83:6c-d*** For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies; they become the sons of Moses and of Aaron, and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom and the elect of God;
2. **“Magnifying Our Calling” has to do with Functional Authority—*Doctrine & Covenants 104:44a*** let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.—*Doctrine & Covenants 104:44b* He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved, shall not be counted worthy to stand.
3. **What It Means to “Magnify Our Calling”—*Jacob 1:19-20*** And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads, if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; Wherefore, **by laboring with our mights**, their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise, their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day.
4. **Magnify Our Calling – Enhancing Our Ability to Exercise Our Authority with Spiritual Power**



Spiritual power and authority is the power of the gospel which makes for salvation.²³ It was with this in mind that the Apostle Paul wrote, "I magnify mine office; if by any means I ... might save some."²⁴ A similar statement from modern revelation is enlightening: *If these my servants will henceforth magnify their calling in honor before me, they shall become men of power and excellent wisdom in the assemblies of my people.*²⁵

The thought is that, as the minister enters into the larger aspects of his calling, meeting its most exacting demands with courage and high expectation, so he is endowed with power from on high and men are saved from sin and to righteousness.

Our church is poorer today than she was in an earlier day because so many of us have lost the vision of the glory of salvation. We are content to think in minimums instead of maximums. Men who exercise priesthood after the order of the Son of God need an enlightened appreciation of what it means to be safe under God. It means, first of all, to be an integrated personality, to have no civil war within himself, to be committed unreservedly to the best that he can see and know and do. It means to be aware of power to the uttermost, and to be alive with that power for the achievement of the best. It means to have a present sense of victory against the background of the ages. *Source: Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956*

5. Sons of Mosiah Magnified their Calling & Received Power and Authority

✍ **Alma 12:3-9** And what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and

a.) **they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth**; For they were men of a sound understanding, and

b.) **they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God**. But this is not all:

c.) **they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting**,

Therefore they had ¹**the spirit of prophecy**, and ²**the spirit of revelation**, and when they taught,

d.) **they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God.**

e.) And they had been teaching the word of God **for the space of fourteen years, among the Lamanites**, having had much success in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth; Yea, by the power of their words, many were brought before the altar of God, to call on his name, and confess their sins before him.

f.) Now these are the circumstances which attended them in their journeyings, for they had many afflictions;

g.) They did suffer much, both in body and in mind; such as hunger, thirst, and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit.

6. Whatsoever Things Are True...Think on These Things

✍ Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

7. D&C 117:5 I say unto you, If these my servants will henceforth magnify their calling in honor before me, **they shall become men of power and excellent wisdom in the assemblies of my people**.

8. Who can keep us from fulfilling our calling?

✍ **No One but Ourselves!**—"What impedes and defeats the work of God in us is our self-will, our determination to run our own lives in our own way. This is why Jesus told his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." **Source: Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956**

Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."