

**“Blessings of the Priesthood for All”**  
Sharon G. and Cecil O. Samuelson

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SISTER SHARON G. SAMUELSON: We appreciate the opportunity, together, to approach a topic of the greatest importance that may yet not be understood even by many faithful members of the Church and certainly not by the world. Let us begin by reviewing the published abstract for this session as a starting point in our discussion today.

ELDER CECIL O. SAMUELSON: “One of the Lord’s purposes in organizing the Relief Society was to prepare His daughters for the greater blessing of the priesthood found in the ordinances and covenants of the temple. The early sisters in Nauvoo anticipated the completion of the temple with great excitement, for they knew, as the Prophet Joseph Smith promised . . . [that] the endowment would bring them “out of darkness into marvelous light.” As these early sisters of the Church were faithful to the covenants that they made in the temple, they received added strength to face the upcoming trials they encountered. As latter-day covenant keepers, how can we draw upon this same strength offered to us? In what ways have we been partakers of the “marvelous light?” How can we access the power of the priesthood through our covenants?

SISTER SAMUELSON: These are excellent questions that deserve clear answers and we believe accurate understanding is available to all of us. Perhaps the best way to approach these matters is to address some basic definitions. First, what is the priesthood? Most of us learned in Primary or early in our Church experience that the usual simple definition is that the priesthood is the authority to act for God. While true, there is much more for us to understand, enjoy and benefit from when we have a broader understanding of the priesthood.

In one of the several core doctrinal priesthood sections in the Doctrine and Covenants, we find the following summary statement given after some very clear direction and caution with respect to the use of the priesthood.

“Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and

the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:45).

ELDER SAMUELSON: we should not be surprised that we are counseled to have charity towards all, have faith govern our households and constantly have virtue at the forefront of our thoughts. But what is this doctrine of the priesthood and how can it distill upon our souls?

In 1982, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said the following:

“This doctrine, this doctrine of the priesthood ‘unknown in the world and but little known even in the Church’ cannot be learned out of the scriptures alone. It is not set forth in the sermons and teachings of the prophets and Apostles, except in small measure. The doctrine of the priesthood is known only by personal revelation. It comes, line upon line and precept upon precept, by the power of the Holy Ghost to those who love and serve God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength (see Doctrine and Covenants 98:12)” [Ensign, May 1982, p. 32].

SISTER SAMUELSON: Likewise, during the Church leadership of Brigham Young, the First Presidency said the following:

“We do not wish incorrect and unsound doctrines to be handed down to posterity under the sanction of great names, to be received and valued by future generations as authentic and reliable . . . . The interests of posterity are, to a certain extent, in our hands. Errors in history and in doctrine, if left uncorrected by us who are conversant with the events, and who are in a position to judge of the truth or falsity of the doctrines, would go to our children as though we had sanctioned and endorsed them” (Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Daniel H. Wells, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:232 in *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 144).

Given, then, the vital importance of correct doctrine and the too commonly discovered lack of understanding concerning it, let us review some of the foundational principles that apply to the doctrine of the priesthood.

ELDER SAMUELSON: One, the teachings of scripture and latter-day prophets and apostles clearly affirm that we lived as female and male spirit children of heavenly parents in a premortal life.

Two, the plan of salvation, known also as the Great Plan of Happiness, including the nature and role of women and men, is eternal. All who are born into mortality sanctioned the plan in the premortal councils and accepted their role and assignment in it.

Three, on the basis of premortal worthiness and preparation, both women and men were called to fulfill important assignments on earth.

Four, Priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of mankind.

Five, all priesthood authority entrusted to the Church has as its purpose the eternal benefit of the individual and the family. Priesthood and family organization exist eternally.

SISTER SAMUELSON: Six, There are differences in the natures and gifts of women and men. In marriage these differences complement each other to create a divine wholeness.

Seven, because of the different natures and roles of women and men in the plan of salvation, Satan seeks to blur the differences, confuse the roles, and thus disrupt the unity of women and men.

Eight, women and men of God understand, respect, and do not envy the unique roles of one another. Reversal or renunciation of roles will result in the destruction of the vital attributes of both femininity and masculinity, womanhood and manhood.

Nine, a woman's role in the family and in the Church, though different from that of the man, is of equal magnitude and value.

Ten, in addition to the many talents and strengths women share with men, they have the unique capacity to bear children and enjoy special natural gifts of nurturing, compassion, tenderness, gentleness and spiritual sensitivity.

ELDER SAMUELSON: Of course, we could list additional principles and corollaries to the ten we have mentioned but there is one more that deserves, in our view, special attention. That is, regardless of circumstances in mortality, no worthy woman or man will be denied the privilege and blessing of marriage and family in eternity or any other blessing Heavenly Father has promised others of His children.

Now, as we emphasize our understanding of the absolute equality of men and women in the eyes of Heavenly Father and as the potential recipients of all of His promised blessings, we also must share that we understand the very significant differences that exist between women and men and also between the two of us. Happily, because there is so much more that we agree upon, we can enjoy each other's differences and idiosyncrasies. One of the things we agree on is how much we enjoyed President Monson's address at this Women's Conference five years ago on May 2, 2008. His title was "Joy in the Journey" and it is worth reviewing by all as it was published by Deseret Book in their compilation of the Women's Conference talks. We would like to share the story he used which was enjoyable and illustrative. This is what he said.

SISTER SAMUELSON: "As I think of the different characteristics of women and men, I'm reminded of a story I heard not too long ago. A couple's lawnmower was broken and wouldn't run. The wife kept hinting to her husband that he should get it fixed, but somehow the message never sank in. The lawn continued to grow.

"Finally she thought of a clever way to make her point. When her husband arrived home from work one day, he found her seated in the tall grass, busily snipping away with a tiny pair of sewing scissors.

“He watched silently for a short time and then went into the house. He was gone only a few moments. When he returned, he handed her a toothbrush. ‘When you finish cutting the grass,’ he said, ‘you might as well sweep the sidewalks.’

“The doctors say he will probably walk again but will always limp!”

We don’t know the level of truth of this story but it was President Monson who shared it.

ELDER SAMUELSON: Now, having established some basis for our assertions of equality in receiving the blessings of the priesthood and also the significance in the differences between women and men, let us return to the questions posed in the introductory abstract for this session. You recall that reference was made to the Nauvoo Temple and the power the endowment there created in the lives of the early sisters. How do we apply what was learned in the early days of the Church to our lives today?

SISTER SAMUELSON: In this regard, a statement by the former radio commentator, Paul Harvey, comes to mind. He was speaking about some of the tremendous difficulties in our society at the time of the Vietnam War. He said: “In times like these, it helps to recall that there have always been times like these” (Peter’s Quotations, pg. 411). He wasn’t suggesting that we have or will always have a Vietnam War, but he was reminding us that throughout all recorded history, people have problems, challenges and difficulties with only the specifics changing. In fact, we as Latter-day Saints should recognize more than any other people that such problems and confusion are really explained by what we know about the Plan of Salvation. That is, we have been blessed to come to earth to learn and demonstrate our faithfulness in the light of challenging and even sometimes horrible circumstances.

As we have recently experienced a rather oppressive winter with cold and inversions, at least in Utah, we marvel how these early sisters and pioneers who were tortured in Nauvoo, suffered in crossing the plains, and barely survived the early days in these mountain valleys were able to do what they did. On the other hand, they were not subjected to some of the vexing modern trials evident about and among us such as pornography, violence, the media and the erosion of many values previously supported in general ways by society. Someone once said, the more things change, the more they are the same. Happily, some things, the very most important things, do not change.

ELDER SAMUELSON: Our Heavenly Father and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, are not changeable. Their goal and complete efforts from the very beginning and before our earth was formed have been consistent. We all know this verse from Moses and it is, and always will be, absolutely true. “For behold, this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Thus, our approach should be consistent with that of the early sisters. And, if it is, we can expect the same results. Let us share an example from our own family history.

SISTER SAMUELSON: My great-great-grandparents, Aimé and Elizabeth Giauque, resided in St. Imier among the hills of Switzerland near Bern. In the year of 1860, my great-great-grandfather died of typhoid fever leaving the support of four of the six children to his wife. She engaged in the watch-making industry and cleaned watches to provide for her family.

One day the LDS missionaries came and Mother Giauque readily accepted the gospel and was baptized. After that her greatest desire was to go to Zion (or the center of the Church). Every spare centime or penny was saved from her earnings with this in view. In June 1868, arrangements had been made to organize a company of Saints in Liverpool to go to Zion. She thought this opportunity should not be allowed to pass! The older children were away from home or not interested in the Gospel. Only the two youngest boys needed her care at this time. These conditions placed her in a position where she made the hardest decision of her life. There was enough money for one passage so she decided to send her eleven-year-old son, Arnold, to Zion to prepare the way for her and her youngest son, my great-grandfather, Jules. She said that when the leaving came, she could scarcely bare the suffering of parting with her boy. She was fortified with the knowledge that he was a serious, responsible boy and would be in the care of priesthood leaders and other saints.

When she had said the final good-bye to Arnold and the missionary of that town, she stood in her doorway and watched them crossing the fields as they started on their journey. Several times her boy stopped and waved to her and it was with the greatest restraint that she kept herself from calling to him to return. But she remained strong and watched until they passed from view. She constantly prayed for her son's protection and her prayers were answered. Considering the hazards of travel at that time, Arnold's journey was without mishap and he eventually arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in September 1868.

However, Arnold was in a strange town and alone, homesick and homeless having no place to go and for the time being, deserted by his fellow travelers. He sat on the tongue of a wagon in the yard of the old Tithing House. His few worldly possessions were beside him. A stranger by the name of Henry Reiser noticed him and after hearing his story, invited Arnold to come and live with his family. Brother Reiser, who was a pioneer jeweler, employed Arnold and he remained with the family for three years. At fourteen he had saved enough money, combined with his mother's savings, to bring his mother and brother to the Salt Lake Valley.

ELDER SAMUELSON: How many of us in attendance today would be willing to send off one of our little ones halfway around the world, even with loved and trusted missionaries, with an eventual reunion so uncertain in its details? Nevertheless, we are all asked to do hard and difficult things within the context of our own specialized challenges. In large part, our capacity to achieve what we must is made possible because of the Savior's Atonement and through the power of the priesthood which is accessible to all of us. We don't know for sure how much Grandmother Giauque knew or understood about the details of priesthood power but we do know she had the faith and understanding necessary to trust the priesthood and also realize the blessings that would accrue to her and her family.

SISTER SAMUELSON: Another example from my husband's family comes to mind. We are very grateful this is not the pattern today. My husband's maternal grandfather, Joseph Mitchell, joined the Church in Scotland with other members of his family. For financial reasons common to most of our ancestors and yours, it took him several years and much sacrifice to finally be able to reach these valleys as a mature, young adult. He was fortunate to obtain employment, meet and marry his future wife, Susan Brazier, and begin their family. Although they had saved a little money to buy a house, it was just a start. They had nothing else but a little boy and another baby on the way when he received a mission call to leave his family and return to Scotland as a missionary. By then, in his late thirties, this created a very significant challenge but both grandparents understood the importance of accepting the call of the Lord's prophet and he went without complaint from either one of them.

We are sure that life was hard for them but we know very few of the details. They never felt to complain or doubt because they understood and were grateful for the blessings of the priesthood to sustain them through these various trials. Now it is clear to their very large posterity that tremendous blessings of the priesthood have come to their entire family for several generations. We perhaps emphasize grandfather's mission because he kept an almost daily journal of his labors and experiences. We are now old enough to understand that had Grandmother Mitchell kept a similar journal, it probably would have been much longer. Likely, her problem was that she did not have the time or strength to write or even reflect on her very demanding life as a virtually single parent without external financial support for the two-year mission.

ELDER SAMUELSON: We share these two examples from the many we could choose, not because they are unique or strange, but rather because they are so typical of the early saints and so similar in terms of the effort or sacrifice we so often see among and near us. We have come to conclude that without the blessings of the priesthood falling equally on both women and men, none of this would be possible and with the blessings of the priesthood and our accepting them, everything is possible.

In the April 2013 issue of the *Ensign*, Sister Valerie M. Hudson, a former BYU professor who now teaches at Texas A&M University, and Brother Richard B. Miller, a Professor of Family Life at Brigham Young University, wrote an interesting and helpful article entitled "Equal Partnership in Marriage." Their central point was that in the plan of happiness, woman and man play equally powerful and equally important roles. As they explored and summarized both the teachings of living prophets and also the findings of scholarly research on marriage and the family, they drew attention to the all too common mistaken perception that "if two things are equal, they must be identical to each other" (*Ensign*, April 2013, pg. 19). We recognize that such is not possible nor is it consistent with Heavenly Father's plan.

SISTER SAMUELSON: Over thirty years ago, Sister Patricia T. Holland wrote a wonderfully helpful article published in the *Ensign* entitled "A Woman's Perspective on the Priesthood." All that she shared is still timely and clarifying. She began by quoting President Spencer W. Kimball who talked about our premortal life and said: "We had full equality as his spirit children." Then he went on to say "within those great assurances, however, our roles and assignments differ." Likewise, he gave this reminder to faithful women which is both encouraging but cautioning.

“Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain tasks. . . . You are accountable for those things which long ago were expected of you just as are those we sustain as prophets and apostles!” (*Ensign*, November 1979, p. 102.)

Pat Holland also added her own testimony in this regard. She said, “I believe that we made sacred promises in premortal councils regarding our role in building the kingdom of God on earth. In turn we were promised the gifts and powers necessary to fulfill those very special tasks” (Patricia T. Holland, *A Woman’s Perspective on the Priesthood*, BYU Women’s Conference, 1 February, 1980, p. 1).

To her testimony, we add our own conviction that these special promises and obligations are really real and really true.

ELDER SAMUELSON: Even though, as we mentioned at the outset, the key roles of righteous women are so central to God’s plan for all of us, they are still not fully appreciated by many both in and outside of the Church. We believe this is the reason that from the very onset of the Restoration the apostles and prophets have spoken often and clearly on this subject. In a rather brief but important article in the September 2009, issue of the *Liahona* magazine, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf gave several examples of what has been said and also offered his own perspectives and examples.

First, he quoted President Heber J. Grant who said, “Without the devotion and absolute testimony of the living God in the hearts of our mothers, this Church would die” (Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham, 1941, p. 151).

Then he referenced this counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley: “It is so tremendously important that the women of the Church stand strong and immovable for that which is correct and proper under the plan of the Lord. . . . We call upon the women of the Church to stand together for righteousness. They must begin in their own homes. They can teach it in their classes. They can voice it in their communities” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, p. 20).

SISTER SAMUELSON: I particularly liked an example President Uchtdorf shared about his wife, Harriet’s, mother. He said, “Let me share some thoughts about Sister Carmen Reich, my mother-in-law, who was truly an elect lady. She embraced the gospel in a most difficult and dark time of her life, and she liberated herself from grief and sorrow.

“As a young woman, a widow and the mother of two young girls, she freed herself from a world of old traditions and moved into a world of great spirituality. She embraced the teachings of the gospel, with its intellectual and spiritual power, on a fast track. When the missionaries gave her the Book of Mormon and invited her to read the verses they had marked, she read the whole book within only a few days. She learned things beyond the understanding of her peers because she learned them by the Spirit of God. She was the humblest of the humble, the wisest of the wise, because she was willing and pure enough to believe when God had spoken.

“She was baptized on November 7, 1954. Only a few weeks after her baptism, she was asked by the missionary who baptized her to write her testimony. The missionary wanted to use her testimony in his teaching to help others feel the true spirit of conversion. Fortunately, the missionary kept the handwritten original for more than 40 years, and then he returned it to her as a very special and loving gift” (President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, *Liahona*, September 2009, p. 2).

ELDER SAMUELSON: At a previous Women’s Conference, President Uchtdorf shared parts of his mother-in-law’s testimony, and her impact on her posterity since continues to be very significant. Many of the rest of us can share similar accounts of the continued and magnifying blessings that come from the understanding and commitment to the blessings of the priesthood modeled by our magnificent woman ancestors.

But it is not just the influence of mothers and grandmothers that is so powerful and important. In her very helpful little book, *A Single Voice*, Sister Kristen M. Oaks speaks to and about single sisters. The subtitle of her book, *The Unexpected Life Is No Less a Life*, clearly makes the point that the circumstances of women, like men, are not only unique but often are very different than one would have hoped for or expected. Nevertheless, the challenge to all is to press forward, doing the very best we can, whatever the particular challenges of our own situations might be.

SISTER SAMUELSON: These are the words of Kristen Oaks. Although focused on single sisters, the insights are helpful to everyone trying to meet her or his full potential. “As our knowledge of the gospel increases, so does our desire to make commitments and draw closer to Heavenly Father. Setting spiritual switch points results in making covenants. Many confused single sisters think of going to the temple as a reward for getting married. Sisters in their late twenties and early thirties often desperately need the added blessings provided by attending the temple, but they have apprehensions about making covenants alone. One single sister in her early thirties confided in me [says Sister Oaks], ‘I long to receive my endowments but I worry that I am sending out a signal that I’ve given up on the idea that anyone might marry me.’ Going to the temple alone is not a consolation prize; it is the consummate gift from our Heavenly Father. When we go to the temple we go to make covenants with our Father in Heaven. These covenants reward our lives by broadening our understanding, enriching our spirituality, protecting us, and providing us with peace and revelation” (Kristen M. Oaks, *A Single Voice*, 2008, Deseret Book, p. 41-42).

ELDER SAMUELSON: Clearly, the temple has been very important to Sister Oaks and she suggests that it should be to all of us, single, married, widowed, divorced, young, old, female or male, as we strive to find meaning in our lives and access the promised blessing of the priesthood. Let me return again to her words.

“I wanted the power of the priesthood in my life, and I felt it by attending the temple. . . . During my times of personal sadness and need I came to learn of the healing and revelatory power of the temple. The temple literally can serve as a place of revelation and refuge for those in need. We can experience a variety of different blessings for our visits there. I would receive inspiration for work, resolve personal problems, be given added emotional and physical endurance, or feel a joy



and contentment in the love that Heavenly Father has for all His children. No other place on earth can provide such comforting solace. It is a holy haven where the power of God is manifested to men and women on earth. Go there often to be close to your Heavenly Father.”

SISTER SAMUELSON: Sister Oaks then goes on to teach more about the temple as a place for all to obtain priesthood blessings. Please listen to her words. “The temple is a place of learning. In Doctrine and Covenants 110, Joseph Smith recorded that in the Kirtland Temple, ‘the veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened’ (v.1). My attendance in the temple [said Sister Oaks] gave me similar experiences. The Lord would always provide solutions and inspiration or, at the very least, clarity of mind and peace in my soul. Time spent in the temple is transforming. The serenity I felt enabled me to function so much more effectively. Even in the times when I was discouraged and tired, I left feeling clean and renewed, strong enough to cope with what lay ahead.”

Then she adds this point which is especially salient for our topic today. “There is great equality in the temple. In our white clothing we are all equal before the Lord. There is great power in being prayed for in the temple. The dying, weak, afflicted, and heartbroken know this. In this world, prayer is sometimes the only remedy for the pain that seems overwhelming and devastating. There are moments, minutes, and months when pain seems unbearable and beyond our capacity to endure. Often in those times that I went to the temple seeking help from Father in Heaven, I prayed for myself and others I knew to be in need. I always came away strengthened and uplifted and encouraged” (Oaks, *ibid*, p. 140-141).

ELDER SAMUELSON: So many faithful Latter-day Saint leaders, both women and men, have spoken and taught about the equality of priesthood blessings for all faithful Church members, female and male. Two years ago, a wonderful new resource was made available to the sisters of the Church at the direction of the First Presidency. I speak of the inspired volume *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*. This special book is the product of several years of thoughtful, prayerful and diligent work. We both recommend it to you and I will now share “A Message from the First Presidency” which they prepared to introduce this treatise of knowledge and inspiration.

“Dear Sisters:

“In grateful recognition of the blessing of Relief Society in the lives of Church members, we have directed the preparation of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*. We pray that this book will be a blessing to you and to those whose lives you touch.

“We express our love and admiration for you and recognize that you are beloved daughters of Heavenly Father and dedicated disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are part of a great worldwide sisterhood. Guided by your motto, “Charity never faileth,” you help strengthen families and build up the kingdom of God on the earth.

“We encourage you to study this book and allow its timeless truths and inspiring examples to influence your lives.

“We testify that the Lord has restored the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that Relief Society is an important part of that restoration. Relief Society sisters have a glorious heritage. We pray that this volume will be an important resource for preserving that heritage.”

### *THE FIRST PRESIDENCY*

SISTER SAMUELSON: Now, with that wonderful and clarifying preface, let me take you directly to chapter 8 which is entitled, “Blessings of the Priesthood for All: An Inseparable Connection with the Priesthood.” President Gordon B. Hinckley makes this statement on the introductory page: “There is strength and great capacity in the women of this Church. There is leadership and direction, a certain spirit of independence, and yet great satisfaction in being a part of this, the Lord’s kingdom, and of working hand in hand with the priesthood to move it forward.”

We don’t have time this morning to cover all the important material contained in the seventeen pages of this chapter but we commend a careful and prayerful study of what is presented in its entirety. Let us just touch on a few points or teachings that have been particularly impressive to us.

ELDER SAMUELSON: We all know that worthy men are ordained to priesthood offices and are assigned or called to specific as well as general responsibilities, tasks and duties. Unfortunately, on occasion, some are confused as to the scope and bounds of what these ordinations actually mean. I find the following explanation on page 127 of chapter 8 to be very helpful.

“In a general conference address, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: ‘While we sometimes refer to priesthood holders as “the priesthood,” we must never forget that the priesthood is not owned or embodied in those who hold it. It is held in a sacred trust to be used for the benefit of men, women and children alike’” (Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 36).

Elder Oaks then quoted Elder John A. Widstoe, who also served as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve: “Men have no greater claim than women upon the blessings that issue from the Priesthood and accompany its possession” (John A. Widstoe, *Priesthood and Church Government* [1939] p. 83).

SISTER SAMUELSON: Sister Sheri Dew who served in a former General Relief Society Presidency also shared similar, clear insight. These are her words.

“Sisters, some will try to persuade you that because you are not ordained to the priesthood, you have been shortchanged. They are simply wrong, and they do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The blessings of the priesthood are available to every righteous man and woman. We may all receive the Holy Ghost, obtain personal revelation, and be endowed in the temple, from which we emerge ‘armed’ with power. The power of the priesthood heals, protects, and inoculates all of the righteous against the powers of darkness. Most significantly, the fulness of the priesthood contained in the highest ordinances of the house of the Lord can be received only by

a man and woman together” (Sheri L. Dew, *Ensign*, November 2001, p. 13; quoting Doctrine and Covenants 109:22 [*Daughters in My Kingdom*, p.128]).

While there is much more that would be worthwhile to say from this chapter, let us just limit our references to it with this concluding statement President Gordon B. Hinckley shared with Relief Society Sisters.

“Let me say to you sisters that you do not hold a second place in our Father’s plan for the eternal happiness and well-being of His children. You are an absolutely essential part of that plan.

“Without you the plan could not function. Without you the entire program would be frustrated. . .

“Each of you is a daughter of God, endowed with a divine birthright. You need no defense of that position. . . .” (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, November 1996, pp. 67-68, [*Daughters in my Kingdom*, p. 143]).

ELDER SAMUELSON: We have purposefully referred very liberally to the teachings of these great leaders we respect because we want us all to be absolutely convinced we are on solid doctrinal ground when we assert the notion that women and men share equality in the blessings of the priesthood. Of this we are personally convinced and gratefully share that testimony with each of you. Certainly, all of us have more to learn as we strive to qualify for additional blessings made possible by the priesthood. Nevertheless, we take great comfort in those things we do know to be true and are grateful for a Heavenly Father who considers all of His children, everyone, as His favorites, entitled to all that He has if we and they but live our lives to qualify for these blessings. This comes about by making and keeping our sacred covenants and doing all we each can individually as well as collectively to strive for and accept the blessings of the priesthood in our lives.