Prepare for “To Reach Our Goals-It Will Take Courage”
Taught by Carrie Miller

May You Have Courage
President Thomas S. Monson
President of the Church

My earnest prayer is that you will have the courage required to refrain from judging others, the courage to be chaste and virtuous, and the courage to stand firm for truth and righteousness.

My dear young sisters, what a glorious sight you are. I realize that beyond this magnificent Conference Center many thousands are assembled in chapels and in other settings throughout much of the world. I pray for heavenly help as I respond to the opportunity to address you.

We have heard timely, inspiring messages from your general Young Women leaders. These are choice women, called and set apart to guide and teach you. They love you, as do I.

You have come to this earth at a glorious time. The opportunities before you are nearly limitless. Almost all of you live in comfortable homes, with loving families, adequate food, and sufficient clothing. In addition, most of you have access to amazing technological advances. You communicate through cell phones, text messaging, instant messaging, e-mailing, blogging, Facebook, and other such means. You listen to music on your iPods and MP3 players. This list, of course, represents but a few of the technologies which are available to you.

All of this is a little daunting to someone such as I, who grew up when radios were generally large floor models and when there were no televisions to speak of, let alone computers or cell phones. In fact, when I was your age, telephone lines were mostly shared. In our family, if we wanted to make a telephone call, we would have to pick up the phone and listen first to make certain no other family was using the line, for several families shared one line.

I could go on all night talking about the differences between my generation and yours. Suffice it to say that much has changed between the time I was your age and the present.

Although this is a remarkable period when opportunities abound, you also face challenges which are unique to this time. For instance, the very technological tools I have mentioned provide opportunities for the adversary to tempt you and to ensnare you in his web of deceit, thereby hoping to take possession of your destiny.

As I contemplate all that you face in the world today, one word comes to my mind. It describes an attribute needed by all of us but one which you—at this time of your life and in this world—will need particularly. That attribute is courage.

Tonight I’d like to talk with you about the courage you will need in three aspects of your lives:
• First, the courage to refrain from judging others;
• Second, the courage to be chaste and virtuous; and
• Third, the courage to stand firm for truth and righteousness.

May I speak first about the courage to refrain from judging others. Oh, you may ask, “Does this really take courage?” And I would reply that I believe there are many times when refraining from judgment—or gossip or criticism, which are certainly akin to judgment—takes an act of courage.

Unfortunately, there are those who feel it necessary to criticize and to belittle others. You have, no doubt, been with such people, as you will be in the future. My dear young friends, we are not left to wonder what our behavior should be in such situations. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior declared, “Judge not.” 1
At a later time He admonished, “Cease to find fault one with another.” 2 It will take real courage when you are surrounded by your peers and feeling the pressure to participate in such criticisms and judgments to refrain from joining in.

I would venture to say that there are young women around you who, because of your unkind comments and criticism, are often left out. It seems to be the pattern, particularly at this time in your lives, to avoid or to be unkind to those who might be judged different, those who don’t fit the mold of what we or others think they should be.

The Savior said:
“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. …
“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” 3

Mother Teresa, a Catholic nun who worked among the poor in India most of her life, spoke this truth: “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”

A friend told me of an experience she had many years ago when she was a teenager. In her ward was a young woman named Sandra who had suffered an injury at birth, resulting in her being somewhat mentally handicapped. Sandra longed to be included with the other girls, but she looked handicapped. She acted handicapped. Her clothing was always ill fitting. She sometimes made inappropriate comments. Although Sandra attended their Mutual activities, it was always the responsibility of the teacher to keep her company and to try to make her feel welcome and valued, since the girls did not.

Then something happened: a new girl of the same age moved into the ward. Nancy was a cute, redheaded, self-confident, popular girl who fit in easily. All the girls wanted to be her friend, but Nancy didn’t limit her friendships. In fact, she went out of her way to befriend Sandra and to make certain she always felt included in everything. Nancy seemed to genuinely like Sandra.

Of course the other girls took note and began wondering why they hadn’t ever befriended Sandra. It now seemed not only acceptable but desirable. Eventually they began to realize what Nancy, by her example, was teaching them: that Sandra was a valuable daughter of our Heavenly Father, that she had a contribution to make, and that she deserved to be treated with love and kindness and positive attention.

By the time Nancy and her family moved from the neighborhood a year or so later, Sandra was a permanent part of the group of young women. My friend said that from then on she and the other girls made certain no one was ever left out, regardless of what might make her different. A valuable, eternal lesson had been learned.

True love can alter human lives and change human nature.

My precious young sisters, I plead with you to have the courage to refrain from judging and criticizing those around you, as well as the courage to make certain everyone is included and feels loved and valued.

I turn next to the courage you will need to be chaste and virtuous. You live in a world where moral values have, in great measure, been tossed aside, where sin is flagrantly on display, and where temptations to stray from the strait and narrow path surround you. Many are the voices telling you that you are far too provincial or that there is something wrong with you if you still believe there is such a thing as immoral behavior.

Isaiah declared, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.” 4

Great courage will be required as you remain chaste and virtuous amid the accepted thinking of the times. In the world’s view today there is little thought that young men and young women will remain morally clean and pure before marriage. Does this make immoral behavior acceptable? Absolutely not!

The commandments of our Heavenly Father are not negotiable!

Powerful is this quote from news commentator Ted Koppel, host of ABC’s Nightline program for many years. Said he:
“We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. ‘Shoot up if you must; but use a clean needle.’ ‘Enjoy sex whenever with whomever you wish; but [protect yourself].’
“No. The answer is no. Not no because it isn’t cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward—but no, because it’s wrong. …

“What Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions, they are Commandments. Are, not were.” 5

My sweet young sisters, maintain an eternal perspective. Be alert to anything that would rob you of the blessings of eternity. Help in maintaining the proper perspective in these permissive times can come to you from many sources. One valuable resource is your patriarchal blessing. Read it frequently. Study it carefully. Be guided by its cautions. Live to merit its promises. If you have not yet received your patriarchal blessing, plan for the time when you will receive it, and then cherish it.

If any has stumbled in her journey, there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior died to provide you and me that blessed gift. The path may be difficult, but the promise is real: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” 6 “And I will remember [them] no more.” 7

Some years ago another First Presidency made this statement, and your First Presidency today echoes the appeal. I quote: “To the youth … , we plead with you to live clean [lives], for the unclean life leads only to suffering, misery, and woe physically,—and spiritually it is the path to destruction. How glorious and near to the angels is youth that is clean; this youth has joy unspeakable here and eternal happiness hereafter. Sexual purity is youth’s most precious possession; it is the foundation of all righteousness.” 8

May you have the courage to be chaste and virtuous.

My final plea tonight is that you have the courage to stand firm for truth and righteousness. Because the trend in society today is away from the values and principles the Lord has given us, you will almost certainly be called upon to defend that which you believe. Unless the roots of your testimony are firmly planted, it will be difficult for you to withstand the ridicule of those who challenge your faith. When firmly planted, your testimony of the gospel, of the Savior, and of our Heavenly Father will influence all that you do throughout your life. The adversary would like nothing better than for you to allow derisive comments and criticism of the Church to cause you to question and doubt. Your testimony, when constantly nourished, will keep you safe. Recall with me Lehi’s vision of the tree of life. He saw that many who had held to the iron rod and had made their way through the mists of darkness, arriving at last at the tree of life and partaking of the fruit of the tree, did then “cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.” 9 Lehi wondered as to the cause of their embarrassment. As he looked about, he “beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building. …”

“And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who … were partaking of the fruit.” 10

The great and spacious building in Lehi’s vision represents those in the world who mock God’s word and who ridicule those who embrace it and who love the Savior and live the commandments. What happens to those who are ashamed when the mocking occurs? Lehi tells us, “And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.” 11

My beloved young sisters, with the courage of your convictions, may you declare with the Apostle Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.” 12

Lest you feel inadequate for the tasks which lie ahead, I remind you of another of the Apostle Paul’s stirring statements from which we might draw courage:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 13

In closing may I share with you the account of a brave young woman whose experience has stood through the ages as an example of the courage to stand for truth and righteousness.
Most of you are familiar with the Old Testament account of Esther. It is a very interesting and inspiring record of a beautiful young Jewish girl whose parents had died, leaving her to be raised by an older cousin, Mordecai, and his wife.

Mordecai worked for the king of Persia, and when the king was looking for a queen, Mordecai took Esther to the palace and presented her as a candidate, advising her not to reveal that she was Jewish. The king was pleased with Esther above all the others and made Esther his queen.

Haman, the chief prince in the king’s court, became increasingly angry with Mordecai because Mordecai would not bow down and pay homage to him. In retribution, Haman convinced the king—in a rather devious manner—that there were “certain people” in all 127 provinces of the kingdom whose laws were different from others’ and that they would not obey the king’s laws and should be destroyed. 14 Without naming these people to the king, Haman was, of course, referring to the Jews, including Mordecai.

With the king’s permission to handle the matter, Haman sent letters to the governors of all of the provinces, instructing them “to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, … [on] the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.” 15 Through a servant, Mordecai sent word to Esther concerning the decree against the Jews, requesting that she go in to the king to plead for her people. Esther was at first reluctant, reminding Mordecai that it was against the law for anyone to go unbidden into the inner court of the king. Punishment by death would be the result—unless the king were to hold out his golden scepter, allowing the person to live.

Mordecai’s response to Esther’s hesitation was to the point. He replied to her thus: “Think not … that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, … thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed.” 16 And then he added this searching question: “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” 17

In response, Esther asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews he could and to ask them to fast three days for her and said that she and her handmaids would do the same. She declared, “I [will] go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” 18 Esther had gathered her courage and would stand firm and immovable for that which was right.

Physically, emotionally, and spiritually prepared, Esther stood in the inner court of the king’s house. When the king saw her, he held out his golden scepter, telling her that he would grant whatever request she had. She invited the king to a feast she had arranged, and during the feast she revealed that she was a Jew. She also exposed Haman’s underhanded plot to exterminate all of the Jews in the kingdom. Esther’s plea to save herself and her people was granted. 19

Esther, through fasting, faith, and courage, had saved a nation.

You will probably not be called upon to put your life on the line, as did Esther, for that which you believe. You will, however, most likely find yourself in situations where great courage will be required as you stand firm for truth and righteousness.

Again, my dear young sisters, although there have always been challenges in the world, many of those which you face are unique to this time. But you are some of our Heavenly Father’s strongest children, and He has saved you to come to the earth “for such a time as this.” 20 With His help, you will have the courage to face whatever comes. Though the world may at times appear dark, you have the light of the gospel, which will be as a beacon to guide your way.

My earnest prayer is that you will have the courage required to refrain from judging others, the courage to be chaste and virtuous, and the courage to stand firm for truth and righteousness. As you do so, you will be “an example of the believers,” 21 and your life will be filled with love and peace and joy. May this be so, my beloved young sisters, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

Be Strong and of a Good Courage

By President Thomas S. Monson

Let us—all of us—have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle.
My beloved brethren, how good it is to be with you once again. I pray for heavenly help as I respond to the opportunity to address you.

Beyond this Conference Center are additional thousands assembled in chapels and in other settings throughout much of the world. A common thread binds all of us together, for we have been entrusted to bear the priesthood of God.

We are here upon the earth at a remarkable period in its history. Our opportunities are almost limitless, and yet we also face a multitude of challenges, some of them unique to our time.

We live in a world where moral values have, in great measure, been tossed aside, where sin is flagrantly on display, and where temptations to stray from the strait and narrow path surround us. We are faced with persistent pressures and insidious influences tearing down what is decent and attempting to substitute the shallow philosophies and practices of a secular society.

Because of these and other challenges, decisions are constantly before us which can determine our destiny. In order for us to make the correct decisions, courage is needed—the courage to say no when we should, the courage to say yes when that is appropriate, the courage to do the right thing because it is right. Inasmuch as the trend in society today is rapidly moving away from the values and principles the Lord has given us, we will almost certainly be called upon to defend that which we believe. Will we have the courage to do so?

Said President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who for many years was a member of the First Presidency: “Not unknown are cases where [those] of presumed faith … have felt that, since by affirming their full faith they might call down upon themselves the ridicule of their unbelieving colleagues, they must either modify or explain away their faith, or destructively dilute it, or even pretend to cast it away. Such are hypocrites.” 1 None of us would wish to wear such a label, and yet are we reluctant to declare our faith in some circumstances?

We can help ourselves in our desire to do what is right if we put ourselves in places and participate in activities where our thoughts are influenced for good and where the Spirit of the Lord will be comfortable.

I recall reading some time ago the counsel a father gave to his son when he went away to school: “If you ever find yourself where you shouldn’t ought to be, get out!” I offer to each of you the same advice: “If you ever find yourself where you shouldn’t ought to be, get out!”

The call for courage comes constantly to each of us. Every day of our lives courage is needed—not just for the momentous events but more often as we make decisions or respond to circumstances around us. Said Scottish poet and novelist Robert Louis Stevenson: “Everyday courage has few witnesses. But yours is no less noble because no drum beats for you and no crowds shout your name.” 2

Courage comes in many forms. Wrote the Christian author Charles Swindoll: “Courage is not limited to the battlefield … or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much quieter. They are inner tests, like remaining faithful when no one’s looking, … like standing alone when you’re misunderstood.” 3 I would add that this inner courage also includes doing the right thing even though we may be afraid, defending our beliefs at the risk of being ridiculed, and maintaining those beliefs even when threatened with a loss of friends or of social status. He who stands steadfastly for that which is right must risk becoming at times disapproved and unpopular.

While serving in the United States Navy in World War II, I learned of brave deeds, instances of valor, and examples of courage. One which I shall never forget was the quiet courage of an 18-year-old seaman—not of our faith—who was not too proud to pray. Of 250 men in the company, he was the only one who each night knelt down by the side of his bunk, at times amidst the jeers of bullies and the jests of unbelievers. With bowed head, he prayed to God. He never wavered. He never faltered. He had courage.

I listened not long ago to an example of one who surely seemed to lack this inner courage. A friend told of a spiritual and faith-promoting sacrament meeting she and her husband had attended in their ward. A young man who held the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood touched the hearts of the entire congregation as he spoke of gospel truths and of the joys of keeping the commandments. He bore a fervent, touching testimony as he stood at the pulpit, appearing clean and neat in his white shirt and tie.
Later that same day, as this woman and her husband drove out of their neighborhood, they saw this same young man who had so inspired them just a few hours earlier. Now, however, he presented a completely different picture as he walked down the sidewalk dressed in scruffy clothes—and smoking a cigarette. My friend and her husband were not only greatly disappointed and saddened, but they were also confused by how he could so convincingly seem to be one person in sacrament meeting and then so quickly seem to be someone else entirely.

Brethren, are you the same person wherever you are and whatever you are doing—the person our Heavenly Father wants you to be and the person you know you should be?

In an interview published in a national magazine, well-known American NCAA basketball player Jabari Parker, a member of the Church, was asked to share the best advice he had received from his father. Replied Jabari, “[My father] said, Just be the same person you are in the dark that you are in the light.”

Important advice, brethren, for all of us.

Our scriptures are filled with examples of the type of courage needed by each of us today. The prophet Daniel exhibited supreme courage by standing up for that which he knew to be right and by demonstrating the courage to pray, though threatened with death were he to do so.

Courage characterized the life of Abinadi, as shown by his willingness to offer his life rather than to deny the truth.

Who can help but be inspired by the lives of the 2,000 stripling sons of Helaman, who taught and demonstrated the need for courage to follow the teachings of parents, to be chaste and pure?

Perhaps each of these scriptural accounts is crowned by the example of Moroni, who had the courage to persevere in righteousness to the very end.

Throughout his life, the Prophet Joseph Smith provided countless examples of courage. One of the most dramatic occurred as he and other brethren were chained together—imagine, chained together—and held in an unfinished cabin next to the courthouse in Richmond, Missouri. Parley P. Pratt, who was among those held captive, wrote of one particular night: “We had lain as if in sleep till the hour of midnight had passed, and our ears and hearts had been pained, while we had listened for hours to the obscene jests, the horrid oaths, the dreadful blasphemies and filthy language of our guards.”

Continued Elder Pratt:

“I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuking the guards; but [I] had said nothing to Joseph, or any one else, although I lay next to him and knew he was awake. On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

“SILENCE. … In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!”

Joseph “stood erect in terrible majesty,” as described by Elder Pratt. He was chained, without a weapon, and yet he was calm and dignified. He looked down upon the quailing guards, who were shrinking into a corner or crouching at his feet. These seemingly incorrigible men begged his pardon and remained quiet.

Not all acts of courage bring such spectacular or immediate results, and yet all of them do bring peace of mind and a knowledge that right and truth have been defended.

It is impossible to stand upright when one plants his roots in the shifting sands of popular opinion and approval. Needed is the courage of a Daniel, an Abinadi, a Moroni, or a Joseph Smith in order for us to hold strong and fast to that which we know is right. They had the courage to do not that which was easy but that which was right.

We will all face fear, experience ridicule, and meet opposition. Let us—all of us—have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle. Courage, not compromise, brings the smile of God’s approval. Courage becomes a living and an attractive virtue when it is regarded not only as a willingness to die manfully but also as the determination to live decently. As we move forward, striving to live as we
should, we will surely receive help from the Lord and can find comfort in His words. I love His promise recorded in the book of Joshua:

“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. …”

“… Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”10

My beloved brethren, with the courage of our convictions, may we declare, with the Apostle Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”11 And then, with that same courage, may we follow Paul’s counsel: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”12

Catastrophic conflicts come and go, but the war waged for the souls of men continues without abatement. Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you, to me, and to priesthood holders everywhere: “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”13 Then we will be, as the Apostle Peter declared, even “a royal priesthood,”14 united in purpose and endowed with power from on high.

May each one leave here tonight with the determination and the courage to say, with Job of old, “While my breath is in me, … I will not remove mine integrity from me.”16 That this may be so is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

The Call for Courage
Thomas S. Monson
First Counselor in the First Presidency

Let us have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle. Courage, not compromise, brings the smile of God’s approval.

Brethren, you are an inspiring sight to behold. It is awesome to realize that in thousands of chapels throughout the world at this hour, your fellow holders of the priesthood of God are receiving this broadcast by way of satellite transmission. Your nationalities vary, and your languages are many, but a common thread binds us together. We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us.

Long ago, the renowned author Charles Dickens wrote of opportunities that await. In his classic volume entitled Great Expectations, Dickens described a boy by the name of Philip Pirrip, more commonly known as Pip. Pip was born in unusual circumstances. He was an orphan. He wished with all his heart that he were a scholar and a gentleman. Yet all of his ambitions and all of his hopes seemed doomed to failure. Do you young men sometimes feel that way? Do those of us who are older entertain these same thoughts? Then one day a London lawyer by the name of Jaggers approached little Pip and told him that an unknown benefactor had bequeathed to him a fortune. The lawyer put his arm around the shoulder of Pip and said to him, “My boy, you have great expectations.”

Tonight, as I look at you young men and realize who you are and what you may become, I declare, “You have great expectations”—not as the result of an unknown benefactor, but as the result of a known benefactor, even our Heavenly Father, and great things are expected of you.

Life’s journey is not traveled on a freeway devoid of obstacles, pitfalls, and snares. Rather, it is a pathway marked by forks and turnings. Decisions are constantly before us. To make them wisely, courage is needed: the courage to say, “No,” the courage to say, “Yes.” Decisions do determine destiny.

The call for courage comes constantly to each of us. It has ever been so, and so shall it ever be. The courage of a military leader was recorded by a young infantryman wearing the gray uniform of the Confederacy during America’s Civil War. He describes the influence of General J. E. B. Stuart in these words:

“At a critical point in the battle[,] he waved his hand toward the enemy and shouted, ‘Forward men! Forward! Just follow me!’ …
“… With courage and resolution [they followed] after him like a wide raging torrent,” and the objective was seized and held. 1 At an earlier time, and in a land far distant, another leader issued the same plea: “Follow me.” 2 He was not a general of war. Rather, He was the Prince of Peace, the Son of God. Those who followed Him then and those who follow Him now win a far more significant victory, with consequences that are everlasting. The need for courage is constant.

The holy scriptures portray the evidence of this truth. Joseph, son of Jacob, the same who was sold into Egypt, demonstrated the firm resolve of courage when to Potiphar’s wife, who attempted to seduce him, he declared: “How … can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And … he hearkened not unto her … and got … out.” 3 In our day, a father applied this example of courage to the lives of his children by declaring, “If you ever find yourself where you shouldn’t be—get out!” Who can help but be inspired by the lives of the 2,000 stripling sons of Helaman who taught and demonstrated the need of courage to follow the teachings of parents, the courage to be chaste and pure? 4 Perhaps each of these accounts is crowned by the example of Moroni, who had the courage to persevere to the end in righteousness. 5 All were fortified by the words of Moses: “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid … : for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, no forsake thee.” 6 He did not fail them. He will not fail us. He did not forsake them. He will not forsake us.

It is this sweet assurance that can guide you and me—in our time, in our day, in our lives. Of course, we will face fear, experience ridicule, and meet opposition. Let us have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle. Courage, not compromise, brings the smile of God’s approval. Courage becomes a living and an attractive virtue when it is regarded not only as a willingness to die manfully, but also as a determination to live decently. A moral coward is one who is afraid to do what he thinks is right because others will disapprove or laugh. Remember that all men have their fears, but those who face their fears with dignity have courage as well.

From my personal chronology of courage, let me share with you an example from military service. Entering the United States Navy in the closing months of World War II was a challenging experience for me. I learned of brave deeds, acts of valor, and examples of courage. One best remembered was the quiet courage of an 18-year-old seaman—not of our faith—who was not too proud to pray. Of 250 men in the company, he was the only one who each night knelt down by the side of his bunk, at times amidst the jeers of the curious, the jests of unbelievers, and, with bowed head, prayed to God. He never wavered. He never faltered. He had courage.

I love these words from the poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox: It is easy enough to be pleasant, When life flows by like a song, But the man worth while is one who will smile, When everything goes dead wrong. 7 Such a man was Paul Tingey. Just a month ago I attended his funeral services here in Salt Lake City. Paul grew up in a fine Latter-day Saint home and served an honorable mission for the Lord in Germany. A companion of his in the mission field was Elder Bruce D. Porter of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Elder Porter described Elder Tingey as one of the most dedicated and successful missionaries he ever knew. At the conclusion of his mission, Elder Tingey returned home, completed his studies at the university, married his sweetheart, and together with her reared their family. He served as a bishop and was successful in his vocation.

Then, without much warning, the symptoms of a dreaded disease struck his nervous system—even multiple sclerosis. Held captive by this malady, Paul Tingey struggled valiantly but then was confined to a care facility for the remainder of his life. There he cheered up the sad and made everyone feel glad. Whenever I attended Church meetings there, Paul lifted my spirits, as he did all others.
When the World Olympics came to Salt Lake City in 2002, Paul was selected to carry the Olympic torch for a specified distance. When this was announced at the care facility, a cheer erupted from those patients assembled, and a hearty round of applause echoed through the halls. As I congratulated Paul, he said with his limited diction, “I hope I don’t drop the torch!”

Brethren, Paul Tingey didn’t drop the Olympic torch. What’s more, he carried bravely the torch he was handed in life and did so to the day of his passing. Spirituality, faith, determination, courage—Paul Tingey had them all.

Someone has said that courage is not the absence of fear but the mastery of it. At times, courage is needed to rise from failure, to strive again.

As a young teenager, I participated in a Church basketball game. When the outcome was in doubt, the coach sent me onto the playing floor right after the second half began. I took an inbounds pass, dribbled the ball toward the key, and let the shot fly. Just as the ball left my fingertips, I realized why the opposing guards did not attempt to stop my drive: I was shooting for the wrong basket! I offered a silent prayer: “Please, Father, don’t let that ball go in.” The ball rimmed the hoop and fell out.

From the bleachers came the call: “We want Monson, we want Monson, we want Monson—out!” The coach obliged.

Many years later, as a member of the Council of the Twelve, I joined other General Authorities in visiting a newly completed chapel where, as an experiment, we were trying out a tightly woven carpet on the gymnasium floor.

While several of us were examining the floor, Bishop J. Richard Clarke, who was then in the Presiding Bishopric, suddenly threw the basketball to me with a challenge: “I don’t believe you can hit the basket, standing where you are!”

I was some distance behind what is now the professional three-point line. I had never made such a basket in my entire life. Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Twelve called out to the others, “I think he can!”

My thoughts returned to my embarrassment of years before, shooting toward the wrong basket. Nevertheless, I aimed and let that ball fly. Through the net it went! Throwing the ball in my direction, Bishop Clarke once more issued the challenge: “I know you can’t do that again!”

Elder Petersen spoke up, “Of course, he can!”

The words of the poet echoed in my heart: “Lead us, O lead us, / Great Molder of men, / Out of the shadow / To strive once again.” 10 I shot the ball. It soared toward the basket and went right through.

That ended the inspection visit.

At lunchtime Elder Petersen said to me, “You know, you could have been a starter in the NBA.”

Winning or losing in basketball fades from our thoughts when we contemplate our duties as bearers of the priesthood of God—both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood. We have a solemn duty to prepare ourselves through compliance with the commandments of the Lord and in responding to the calls we receive to serve Him.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we qualify for the help of the Lord, we can build boys, we can mend men, we can accomplish miracles in His holy service. Our opportunities are without limit.

Though the task seems large, we are strengthened by the truth: “The greatest force in this world today is the power of God as it works through man.” If we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. That divine help, however, is predicated upon our worthiness. To sail safely the seas of mortality, to perform a human rescue mission, we need the guidance of that eternal mariner—even the great Jehovah.

We look up, we reach out to obtain heavenly help. Are our reaching hands clean? Are our yearning hearts pure? Looking backward in time through the pages of history, we find a lesson on worthiness gleaned from the words of the dying King Darius. Through proper rites, Darius had been recognized as legitimate king of Egypt. His rival, Alexander the Great, had been declared legitimate son of Amon. He too was Pharaoh. Alexander, finding the defeated Darius on the point
of death, laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, concluding, “I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods that I do these things truly and without faking.” Darius replied with a gentle rebuke: “Alexander my boy … do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?”

Brethren, as we learn our duty and magnify the callings which have come to us, the Lord will guide our efforts and touch the hearts of those whom we serve.

Many years ago, I would visit an older widow named Mattie, whom I had known for many years and whose bishop I had been. My heart grieved at her utter loneliness. A precious son of hers lived many miles away, and for years he had not visited his mother. Mattie spent long hours in a lonely vigil at her front window. Behind a frayed and frequently opened curtain, the disappointed mother would say to herself, “Dick will come; Dick will come.”

But Dick didn’t come. The years passed by one after another. Then, like a ray of sunshine, Church activity came into the life of Dick, one of my former Aaronic Priesthood boys, who now lived in Houston, Texas, far away from his mother. He journeyed to Salt Lake to visit with me. He telephoned upon his arrival and, with excitement, reported the change in his life. He asked if I had time to see him if he were to come directly to my office. My response was one of gladness. However, I said, “Dick, first visit your mother, and then come to see me.” He gladly complied with my request.

Before he could get to my office, there came a phone call from Mattie, his mother. From a joyful heart came words punctuated by tears: “Bishop, I knew Dick would come. I told you he would. I saw him coming through the window.”

Not many years later at Mattie’s funeral, Dick and I spoke tenderly of that experience. We had witnessed a glimpse of God’s healing power through the window of a mother’s faith in her son.

Time marches on. Duty keeps cadence with that march. Duty does not dim nor diminish. Catastrophic conflicts come and go, but the war waged for the souls of men continues without abatement. Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you, to me, and to priesthood holders everywhere: “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”

May we each have the courage to do so, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.