to live and rear our family in the glorious light of the gospel.

Brethren, I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is His Church, restored in these latter days to fulfill its divine destiny. I pray for the Lord’s blessings to be upon each of you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“What Manner of Men Ought [We] to Be?”

(3 Nephi 27:27)

Gratitude for Those Who Serve

Brethren, I desire to praise you, to counsel you, and finally to remind you of a very precious promise that each of us has received.

First, may I thank you genuinely for your service as priesthood leaders. Sometimes you are going to be anxious about whether you are adequate or not, but you are probably doing better than you think. We commend you for your service.

Would you please accept our gratitude likewise for the way in which you serve Church members, including those who are quiet, second-mile members of the Church, whose deeds are often known only to you and the Lord. These members are not high profile; they are meek and lowly. And these Church members, often unsung, need to be appreciated by each of us. As these Church members go so steadily and effectively about their labors, we should be more mindful of them than we sometimes are.

Recently I was musing aloud to President Packer about these wonderful, meek, and lowly members of the Church and said to him, “My admiration for them is such that in the next world, if they need to have their white robes taken out to be dry-cleaned, I would expect to be going around to pick them up.” And he said, quick as a flash, “And I’ll be doing the dry cleaning.” Please, let us bear in mind these faithful, meek, and lowly members among the flocks that you tend so well.

Becoming a “Man of Christ”

Now in that context of commendation, some counsel. Anciently, the resurrected Savior asked of priesthood leaders, and He did it quitesearchingly, “What manner of men ought ye to be?” Jesus then prescribed that we should be “even as [He] is” (3 Nephi 27:27).

So we should be striving, attribute by attribute, to become more and more like Him, including developing...
the spiritual manners which accompany living “after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

So, for us, putting off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19) and becoming instead a “man of Christ” (Helaman 3:29) does not occur automatically; it occurs “in [the] process of time” (Moses 7:21). So whether you are quietly exemplifying for your families or your Church flocks, there is no substitute for the eloquence of example.

The suggestions which now follow apply in every culture, in every economic situation. Some of these will focus on us as husbands and fathers, some will focus on us in our callings, and some will focus on both.

Brethren, the time remaining in your callings is limited. The clock is running. But you will never be released as a father or a husband. These are eternal callings, and they do not change when you move.

Personal Preparation

So, may I speak about personal preparation?

Your first duty is to obtain and retain the witness of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ (see D&C 46:13–14). When we know, those whom we serve will know that we know. And that is incredibly important. Furthermore, that member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost, prompts us as His shepherds.

Now, these promptings, I’ve found as I’m sure you have, are not always convenient; they are often very demanding. And sometimes the challenges that we face are almost overwhelming. When we feel overcome, He who overcame the world will help us (see John 16:33).

When you are exhausted, feast on the inexhaustible gospel. You will never plumb its depths or measure all its metres and bounds. So as you feast on the scriptures, you will be renewed even when you are exhausted. Your families see you, as will your fellow-servants in the Church, when you are tired. We cannot hide the fatigue, so let them also see your resilience, which is connected with the promise that I will mention later.

Your children will one day leave your nest, but their love of the scriptures is portable, and the scriptures are portable. Let them carry, in addition to the scriptures, a memory of hearing your voice as patriarch, father, priesthood leader, as you read the scriptures aloud and as you liken the scriptures to yourself (see 1 Nephi 19:23). They will remember long after they have left the nest.

As President Packer indicated earlier, let us serve with clean hands and pure hearts. We have to shun pornography. We have to also avoid questionable business practices. Anything that would diminish us spiritually must be shunned.

Should you have any unresolved shortcomings yourself, go to the appropriate priesthood leader. We do not expect each other to be perfect in the kingdom, brethren, but we do not want our leaders swamped in self-pity. Self-pity makes us vulnerable.

Life and its events may bring to you your own allotment of adversity. This has to do with the manner of men that we ought to be. Accept adversity without becoming angry or bitter, and by so doing you will have testified in a unique and lasting way!

I think of young Melissa Howes and how she refused to become angry with God as her father, at age 43, approached death by cancer. During a family prayer just before her father died, Melissa said, according to her mother, “Heavenly Father, bless my daddy, and if you need him more than us, you can have him. We want him, but Thy will be done. And please help us not to be mad at you.”

Family Responsibilities

Now as to our family responsibilities—

Since, as we all know, no other success can compensate for chronic failures in the family, inadequate leadership at home—chronically inadequate leadership—will sooner or later diminish our effectiveness in Church leadership.

We recognize you only have so many disposable hours. Please pace yourselves, doing things “in wisdom and order” (Mosiah 4:27; see also D&C 10:4). Let some of your prime time be given to your prime responsibilities—your wife and family! Otherwise, brethren, family gets only the leftovers. Besides, however good a day at work, it cannot compensate for a bad day at home.

Brethren, love your children’s mother. In an unsettled world, that special relationship simply must be solid and settled. Likewise, let your wife and children hear you pray over them by name in your family prayers.

Please give deserved and specific praise to your wife, your children, and the members of your flocks and quorums. The world puts people down, but you can lift them up, including by giving father’s blessings to your children.
My father was a shy and reluctant but wonderful man, and I had asked him for a father's blessing for many years. And he just felt so shy and reluctant that it didn't occur until later in my life. Yet in that blessing, my father anticipated my major illness by 20 years. And he used these words in blessing me: that I would have the “strength to bear the burdens which may come upon [me] in physical ways ... that [I] may bear [them] as [Paul] did, without complaint.” I am so grateful that a shy but sweet father gave me that father's blessing so many years ago. I still strive to measure up to it.

Our families experience our imperfections all the time. They see our shortfalls. Yet if they can see our spiritual strivings, they will with the breath of kindness blow the chaff away.

Dignity

Next, brethren, as called agents of the Lord—

Since you and I are preparing to live in a celestial culture, whatever exists in our temporary, local cultures which conflicts with the gospel and its standards must simply fall away like so much old scaffolding. The fleeting fashions of the world will, ere long, become obsolete anyway (see 1 Corinthians 7:31). Meanwhile, we should not heed them.

Maintain your dignity and your grooming, even if you are in modest circumstances. In today's world, for instance, Church leaders are often among the few examples of appropriate grooming. Your appearance and your presence are your statements to others about how you see yourself and your callings and how you honor those who called you and sustain them.

We usually do not think of sustaining those who have called us to a position. We need to sustain them. It was the Sunday after he had been sustained as a Counselor in the First Presidency that President Marion G. Romney spoke in our ward, and at the pulpit he said, “I have always sustained the President of the Church, and I can sustain him even when he calls me as one of his Counselors.” We have solemn obligations to sustain those who have called us.

Your spiritual dignity includes keeping confidences. The Lord, the Church member that you counsel, and you really constitute all those who have a need to know certain things. And that dignity, that confidentiality, simply must be maintained.

Let members and your family not only see you going to the temple, which reminds us what manner of men and women we ought to be, but let them also see how what is experienced there passes through you to improve you.

Serving and Leading

Now, brethren, if we will do these and like things day by day, we will become the “manner of men” desired by Jesus. Others will see what we are but also what we are striving to become. They will see that we have truly taken upon us Christ's yoke and are humbly serving others (see Matthew 11:29).

Some years ago I was on an assignment with, then, Elder Howard Hunter in Cairo. We shared a hotel room and after a long, dusty day were resting up before the evening meetings. I asked if I could stretch out and nap a bit, and, of course, he said, “Please do.” And then I awoke prematurely and found President Howard Hunter shining my shoes.

We are to be leader-servants and to bear in mind who we really are. It will be unmistakably conveyed. It will be indelibly imprinted upon the minds and the hearts of others. Granted, our love may not always be reciprocated, or even appreciated, but love is never wasted.

The Promise for Faithful Leaders

Now, finally, to the reminder of the promise given to you and to me and to all the faithful brethren—

That promise is, as you know, that the Lord will renew you in body. This is no small thing for those who seek to serve Him with unweariness (see D&C 84:33; Helaman 10:4–5).

During these blessed times of renewal, there will be moments, brethren, when the Spirit will wash over you like surf—to refresh you, to reassure you, and sometimes to brace you. The Holy Ghost will also let you know personally that the overseeing Lord of the universe knows and loves you personally. He has known you for such a long, long time. He is in the details of your lives. He is mindful, as the scriptures say, of His people in every nation, and surely He is likewise mindful of His priesthood leaders in every nation (see Alma 26:37).

After all, brethren, all those we love and serve are God's children!

I so testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!