

Stop Insulting the Priesthood

by Jason L | Jul 20, 2017 | Featured, ordinances, Priesthood, Service | 4 comments



There's a new party line emerging in the Church about the priesthood. It is this: "No one blesses themselves through the priesthood, so everyone is equally blessed by the priesthood." This is becoming the neat little response to concerns about the men-only nature of God's power. And I find it terribly insulting.

Is it true that no one "lays their hands on their own head"? Yes. But to suggest that receiving ordinances is the only way one is 'blessed' by the priesthood is preposterous. It flies in the face of everything I was taught as a young man and my personal experience as a priesthood holder. I will mourn a great loss if this becomes the official interpretation of the priesthood.

My first post for Rational Faiths (and still one of my proudest contributions) was about the ways in which holding the priesthood blessed my life. I listed three:

1. By encouraging me to live righteously so I can exercise God's power,

2. By giving me meaningful opportunities to serve, and
3. By allowing me to participate frequently in performing holy ordinances.

None of these are available – in the same ways – to faithful women or men who do not hold the priesthood. When women are not offered God’s power in the same way as men, it will not have the same impact on the way they think of righteous living. While women may have many meaningful opportunities to serve, some of the most meaningful to me have been priesthood leadership positions from which they are barred by their gender.

Though we are literally “blessed” by receiving priesthood ordinances, I have never found anything in this world like the feeling of conveying those blessings as God’s instrument. Standing in the water with a new convert you have taught to make them a new member of the Church. Placing hands on the head of the sick and calling down the healing powers of heaven. Ordaining a family member. Setting apart a member for a new calling. Signing off on a temple recommend. Giving someone an affirming worthiness interview. The list could go on.

Though each of these experiences had as its purpose serving others, they were sacred experiences for me, too. We know we are blessed when we serve. So why are we pretending that principle doesn’t apply to priesthood holders?

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Jason L

Jason L grew up in Arizona as a Mormon Democrat with a lawyer father – and heard all the jokes. Now he’s got a Ph.D. in history, is married to a sugar sorceress, and enjoys raising their sweet son.

All posts by Jason L

4 Comments



lemuel on July 20, 2017 at 8:54 am

So here’s the core problem with female ordination:

1. It would be very foolish to do it without a revelation.
2. The Q15 either don’t have the ability, or they don’t have the desire to get a revelation on this matter.

The best answer anyone gives me for this question is "How do you know the Q15 haven't gotten a revelation?" And maybe it's possible that they have revelations on this and all sorts of important matters, but they just aren't sharing it with the swine, but in Joseph's day, when an issue more trivial than this arose (e.g. tobacco juice on the floor), Joseph went to the Lord, and got a revelation, in prose (not just a yes or no feeling). Often the Lord would add additional information for good measure.

Last night I had the missionaries over for dinner, and they read Amos 8 to me:

>Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

The famine has returned.

I would be cool with female ordination if that's what God wants. And if God said no, I would be cool with that too. But the core problem in the Church today is that we don't have revelation anymore. And we need it.

Reply



Jason L on July 20, 2017 at 11:29 am

I would love to see a revelation. But you're right that it would take the apostles asking. I expect it would follow the same pattern as we saw with the change in the racial policies of the church: (1) Enough concern by lay members and outsiders to get the attention of the senior leadership, (2) A prophet who was sufficiently committed and open to seek diligently for an answer, (3) Significant time invested by that prophet in seeking an answer from the Lord.

These things rarely come easily. Joseph Smith seems to have been the exception - not surprising for the dispensation-founding prophet. But others (including Joseph F. Smith and Spencer W. Kimball) have followed the pattern and received clear revelation when they pleaded for it. It can happen today.

Reply



Jesse Stricklan on July 22, 2017 at 7:54 am

If acting in the office of the priesthood is not a blessing, then we do not need to ordain all men, either. We can move to a professional clergy model, which at least allows us to ensure greater quality of training. Then, as in most churches,

the clergy can go around blessing everyone who needs blessing and the rest of us can go about our lives without having to worry about serving the Lord so directly. Think of the amount of callings it would make irrelevant for the general membership! Think of how many less meetings we would be stuck in!

Yee-haw.

To be clear, I am deeply opposed to that idea. I have had innumerable powerful experiences serving in my priesthood capacities. I think lay clergy is a wonderful innovation in Mormonism. Following up on your OP, Jason, I just don't see how it works together with restricting the priesthood on arbitrary grounds.

Reply



Jason L on July 24, 2017 at 9:28 pm

Yes, to all your sentiments here. The Mormon version of a 'priesthood of all believers' is a wonderful thing, full of powerful experiences for the priesthood holders. It should be enlarged as much as possible. If Moses could wish that all the people were prophets, shouldn't we priesthood holders wish that all members could be priesthood holders?

Reply

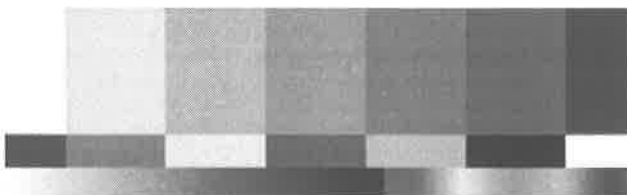
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