

## STAKE CONFERENCE TALK

Is Scouting relevant, you say!

Let me tell you a funny story. My son Connor was serving on his mission in Honduras in a humble pueblito in the country. No paved roads. No weekly garbage pickups and very few conveniences. They didn't have indoor plumbing and had to rely on infrequent rainwater and occasional delivery service for water. They were in the midst of a drought and had to conserve every drop for drinking and cooking. Showers were very low on the priority list. Once after going almost two weeks, he related how hot, dusty and dirty things were getting. "It reminds me a lot of summer camp as a Scout" he said!

A good friend of mine, who is a Navy SEAL, related that during his tour of duty in Afghanistan he used many skills that are relevant to Scouting. He said that Mataguay seemed like "paradise" when compared to the conditions there...

Yes! Scouting is relevant, even today... Let me tell you why.

Our church has been wholly involved in Scouting since 1913. But the world is changing dramatically and many questions abound about its future. I thought I'd speak a few minutes and help answer some of those questions.

### **Question #1 – Is the Church really going to stay involved with the Boy Scouts or are they planning on splitting due to all the controversy?**

The prophet and the general authorities are consistent on this point. The Church is ABSOLUTELY 100% committed to staying involved with the Boy Scouts.

*Elder Thomas Monson said, "Much has been said in the media of late regarding Scouting. Let me affirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has **not** diminished in any way its support of the Scouting movement. [The prophet] has declared that the Church endorses Scouting "and will seek to provide leadership which will help boys keep close to their families and close to the Church as they develop the qualities of citizenship and character and fitness which Scouting represents. ..."*

*"We've remained strong and firm in our support of this great movement for boys and the Oath and the Law which are at its center."*

*... if ever there were a time when the principles of Scouting were vitally needed—that time is now. If ever there were a generation who would benefit by keeping physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight—that generation is the present generation.”*

### **Question #2 – Is the new Duty to God program going to replace Scouting?**

Elder Hammond of the Quorum of Seventy said, *“The Duty to God program was not meant in any way to diminish Scouting in the Church. It was meant to complement Scouting and they work hand-in-hand beautifully. One of the primary reasons for the Duty to God program was to pick up the slack for a boy after he gets his Eagle Scout award.”*

Remember that we are a *world-wide* church and many countries do not have Scouting available to them. The Church must help meet the needs of those boys as well and the Duty to God program significantly helps to meet their needs.

### **Question #3 – But WHY is the Church involved with the Boy Scouts at all?**

*President Benson aptly said, "Give me a young man who has kept himself morally clean and has faithfully attended his Church meetings... who has magnified his priesthood and has earned the Duty to God Award and is an Eagle Scout... who is a seminary graduate and has a burning testimony of the Book of Mormon. Give me such a young man, and I will give you a young man who can perform miracles for the Lord in the mission field and throughout his life"*

The backbone of the Boy Scouts is the **Scout Law** –

***A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent...***

These principles sound familiar, don't they?

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men... 13<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith

Quite a lot of similarity don't you agree?

The Boy Scouts teach...

1. **Citizenship** – D&C 134:5 “We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside...
2. **Scouts learn Achievement and excellence**– rank advancement, merit badges, etc. D&C 131:18 – Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.
3. **Scouts learn Duty to God** – Well over 95% of LDS boys who attain Eagle Scout go on to serve a mission and marry in the temple.
4. **Scouts learn service** – Mos. 2:17 – When you are in the service of your fellowman you are in the service of God.

### **Are these not principles of the gospel?**

Let me offer some parallels between the ideals and principles of Scouting and the sons of Helaman in the Book of Mormon...

The sons of Helaman were men of truth and righteousness. They were committed to the defense of their country, were fearless in the face of death, and courageous in battle. They were selfless, and men of great faith and God rewarded their faith with amazing protection, as none of them died in the many battles they fought in.

## **The Scout Oath:**

**On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country  
and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong,  
mentally awake, and morally straight.**

*Let's break this down and compare it to the “stripling warriors”...*

### **Duty to God -**

"for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him...and they do put their trust in God continually...they are strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day; yea, they do observe to keep his statutes, and his judgments and his commandments continually..." (Alma 53:21;57:27; 58:40)

## **Duty to Country-**

"...entered into a covenant and took their weapons of war to defend their country..." (Alma 53:18)

## **Obey the Scout Law-**

. "...they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness." (Alma 57:21) . "...they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever things they were entrusted...they were men of truth..." (Alma 53:20-21) "...and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it." (Alma 56:47-48)

## **Help Other People at All Times-**

"they would fight in all cases to protect the Nephites and themselves from bondage." (Alma 53:17)

## **Physically Strong-**

"and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity...never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength; and with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites..." (Alma 53:20; 56:56)

## **Mentally Awake-**

"and their minds are firm...they are strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day..and their faith is strong in the prophecies concerning that which is to come." (Alma 57:27;58:40)

## **Morally Straight-**

"Yea, they were men of truth and soberness..." (Alma 53:21)

## **The last question I will answer is: Question #4 – What should we be doing about this?**

Let me offer three ideas

1. Let us exhibit the commitment to the program that the brethren exhibit.
2. Give 110% -- this is not just some activity program – this is *the* activity program to build faithful young men who will grow up to serve the Lord on a mission, marry in the Temple and raise a family – and as such, it needs and deserves your absolute commitment. It requires our sacrifice, obedience, and probably a big consecration of time and effort. Sound familiar?

Pres. Hinckley said, “*I have been quoted as saying, “Do the best you can.” But I want to emphasize that it be the very best. We are too prone to be satisfied with mediocre performance. We are capable of doing so much better.*”

3. You can help defend the Boy Scouts of America –  
President Hinkley said, “*You are good. But it is not enough just to be good. You must be good for something. You must contribute good to the world. The world must be a better place for your presence. And the good that is in you must be spread to others . . . In this world so filled with problems, so constantly threatened by dark and evil challenges, you can and must rise above mediocrity, above indifference. You can become involved and speak with a strong voice for that which is right.*”

Boy, does that quote remind me of my wonderful wife, Merrilee!

This is my first full year in my Stake position. I am humbled to see what great YM we have and what wonderful and inspired leaders we have. Poway Stake is usually at the top of the list when the call goes out for volunteers and help for service. I thank you all for the great work you are doing and I look forward to helping you and your young men in any way that I can be of service...

Lastly, let me close by thanking my Scoutmaster, a wonderful man who has since passed away. Fred Erickson served as my ward’s Scoutmaster for something like 30 years. He was always faithful and he is my model for service. You see, I was a very “reluctant” Aaron Priesthood holder. I did not enjoy going to church at all. It was Scouting that kept me in the church when I was young.

President N. Eldon Tanner said: “*... [the] Scout[ing] movement helps build the kingdom of God, it helps us with the priesthood program. Scouters, through the Scout program, can go out and reach boys that cannot be reached otherwise. The President of the Church recognizes that. That is one of the reasons the program was officially recognized and accepted as a part of the Church program. And when we realize that, brethren, let us go out and save those boys!”*

Thank you and God bless you Fred. If it were not for your quiet faithfulness as my Scoutmaster, I might not be here today.

So brethren, Let us “...go out and save those boys”

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