
The Bishop

D&C 72:1, 8

On December 4, 1831, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that “it is expedient in me for a bishop to be appointed unto you” (D&C 72:1). The Lord named Newel K. Whitney as “the man who shall be appointed and ordained unto this power. This is the will of the Lord your God, your Redeemer” (v. 8). Newel, a prosperous businessman in Kirtland, “stagger[ed] under the weight of the responsibility that was about to be placed upon him.” He said to Joseph, “Brother Joseph, I can’t see a Bishop in myself.” Joseph replied, “Go and ask the Lord about it.” Newel asked God and “heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Thy strength is in me.’”¹

Since the days when Edward Partridge and Newel K. Whitney served as bishops, thousands of worthy men have been ordained and set apart as bishops. They have served faithfully as the presiding high priest of their ward and ministered to the temporal and spiritual affairs of their congregations. Of men who have been bishops or are currently serving as bishops, President Dallin H. Oaks said, “[They] are respected by the Lord, inspired by His Spirit, and given the powers of discernment necessary to their office. We honor and love them, and we show this by our consideration for them.”²

In his April 1997 general conference address, President Oaks shared the story of a little boy who needed his bishop:

During a sacrament meeting, a little boy made a big disturbance. After several minutes of trying to quiet this noisy three-year-old, the mother desperately handed him to the father, who was seated on the aisle close to the front of the chapel. By this time the noise distracted the speaker

¹ Roy W. Doxey, *Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants* 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 2:434.

² Dallin H. Oaks, “Bishop, Help!” *Ensign* (May 1997).

and audience, and everyone was very conscious of the parents' plight. The father's patience was much shorter than the mother's. In a few moments he put the little boy over his shoulder, stood up, and started for the back door. Looking back over his father's shoulder and sensing his determined steps, the little boy became quiet and apprehensive. Just as the father approached the rear door of the chapel, the little fellow reached his arms out toward the stand and shouted, "Bishop, help!"³

There are times in life when each of us needs our bishop. Elder Boyd K. Packer, in his April 1998 general conference address, shared a story about Emery Wight, the bishop of the Harper Ward:

Years ago I served on a stake high council with Emery Wight. For 10 years Emery had served as bishop of the rural Harper Ward. His wife, Lucille, became our stake Relief Society president.

Lucille told me that one spring morning a neighbor called at her door and asked for Emery. She told him that he was out plowing. The neighbor then spoke with great concern. Earlier that morning he had passed the field and noticed Emery's team of horses standing in a half-finished furrow with the reins draped over the plow. Emery was nowhere in sight. The neighbor thought nothing of it until much later when he passed the field again, and the team had not moved. He climbed the fence and crossed the field to the horses. Emery was nowhere to be found. He hurried to the house to check with Lucille.

Lucille calmly replied, "Oh, don't be alarmed. No doubt someone is in trouble and came to get the bishop."⁴

³ Oaks, "Bishop, Help!", May 1997.

⁴ Boyd K. Packer, "The Bishop and His Counselors," *Ensign* (May 1998).