



Knowing Our Duty to God

by Tony Peters

In the October General Conference of 2000, Elder Dallin H. Oaks gave a talk titled "The Challenge to Become". In it he described the process of becoming converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He spoke about knowing the gospel, doing what we know we are supposed to do and ultimately becoming disciples of the Savior. This process of "becoming" converted to the gospel is a pattern for a way of life that will bring us closer to the mind and heart of the Savior. It all starts; however, with **KNOWING**. We must know what to do first. Hence, the title of this booklet: Knowing Our Duty to God. With knowledge you can act more in line with correct doctrines.

All of this information can be found within various sources. Web sites, books, pamphlets etc...all containing information on how to implement and administer the LDS Church **Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling our Duty to God** program. My reason for writing this is so that it can all be found in one, concise location. I sure would have appreciated a resource like this when I started working in the YM program.

I have served in the Young Men's organization of the church in one capacity or another for the last 20 years. I've been a councilor in the ward young men's presidency, an assistant advisor, a mission prep teacher, a Varsity Coach and most recently a councilor in the stake young men's presidency. To be honest, it has taken me that long to figure some of these things out. Being a young men's leader is no small task, and it is easy to let some things take a back seat to others.

Over the years as I have served the Young Men of the Church, I find that there are many people who have not yet been able to grasp the concept of the Church's **Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling our Duty to God** (or Duty to God for short) program. I believe that this confusion has two primary sources:

- 1)The 'old' Duty to God program that was a Scouting award pinned to your scout uniform
- 2)The lack of materials in existence on how to administer the 'new' Duty to God program.

Ultimately the administration of the Duty to God program lies with individual Bishops (General Handbook of Instructions "Scouting" section p.1). I can only offer my suggestions, insights and observations and additional information that I have collected over the years. When all is said and done, we must rely upon the inspiration of the Bishop to decide how best to proceed. He is, after all, the President of the Aaronic Priesthood in your ward and holds the keys to revelation for that calling.

Questions I am commonly asked are: What is the Duty to God Program? - How does it work? - Does it replace Scouting? - What does the award look like? - Why the 'Coin'? - Where does it go on the scout uniform? - Who administers the program? - How do you present the certificates? - How do you present the Medallion? - Why "Duty to God", what does that mean?

All those questions send one overwhelming message: People want to know more about this Church-wide program. They want to know what they can do to implement it. I see this is especially true with young men's leaders who seem to want to implement this inspired program, but simply don't know where to start.

Hopefully this book will give you a good starting point.

I have divided my thoughts into the following sections:

- 1) Myths About the Duty to God Program
- 2) What Does "Duty to God" mean?
- 3) What Does the Award Represent?
- 4) Who Administers the Program & How to Present the Awards?
- 5) The Joint Roles of Duty to God and Scouting
- 6) Raising the Bar for Everyone
- 7) The Essential Role of Young Men's Leaders, Fathers and Families
- 8) Summary
- 9) Activity Resources and Ideas

Section 1

Myths about the Duty to God Program:

This is what I call “the 7 Highly Persistent Myths About The Duty to God Program”:

1. This ‘new’ Duty to God program is the same as the old scouting version of the Duty to God award.
2. The Duty to God Program is designed to replace scouting.
3. BSA Training will teach you how to implement the Duty to God Program.
4. The Duty to God award is easy to earn. All you have to do is go to church and give a few talks.
5. The Duty to God program does not require outdoor or physical activities; it is just a spiritual program.
6. There is no leadership training or leadership skills developed by the Duty to God program.
7. The program is only for the YM, not for leaders.

These are just a few of the strange myths that I have encountered as I have tried to educate Young Men’s leaders about the “Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God” program. In order to understand the full impact of this program it is important that we clear up many of these incorrect notions. This will help establish a common groundwork for the rest of what I’ll present in the following pages.

Again, I am going to quickly address these myths, and then go into greater depth in the subsequent chapters.

Myth # 1 – This so called ‘new’ Duty to God program is the same as the old scouting Duty to God program.



This pesky myth still comes up as people wonder what happened to the old award with the green and yellow ribbon and the silver

buffalo skull. That old award holds a lot of nostalgic value for me and for many of my generation. When the term Duty to God is used that is what most of us think about right off the bat.

The old program was a fairly simple one that required that a boy be faithful in attending Church meetings and that he be interviewed on a regular basis by his bishop. (For a list of the old requirements see [appendix A](#)) It was administered by the Church, but was still a BSA award that was given at a Courts of Honor. It was pinned to the scout uniform and worn there from that time on. Even then, it was still fairly uncommon for boys to earn the award and never held the prestige of the Eagle Scout rank. In the year 2000 the Church announced the current Duty to God program in the USA and began phasing out the old familiar one. There were letters sent out, announcements from General Authorities, write-ups done in newspapers and the new program was implemented. Now, eight years later, I still run into people who do not realize that the old program no longer exists. This happened about the same time that the Church announced that they were making the requirements for full-time missionary service more stringent. Personally I don't think of this as a coincidence at all. In order to have better prepared missionaries, the Church needed a YM program that effectively prepared them for Missionary service starting at age 12. The Duty to God program fills that role nicely.



Young Men can still earn the On My Honor award that qualifies them for the religious square knot patch.



Once people realize that the programs are different the questions really start coming on a rapid-fire basis. What is the new program? How do they earn it? What does it look like? Where does it go on the uniform? Does it replace Scouting? Why did they replace the old one?

I plan to answer all of those questions throughout this booklet.

Myth #2 – The Duty to God Program is designed to replace scouting.

I first want to make it clear that the new Duty to God program is not a scouting recognition. Boys do not earn it as part of the scouting program, the award is not presented at a Court of Honor and it is not worn as part of the official scout uniform. This response usually elicits some very confused looks.

Here is the clarification:

“Scouting is part of the Aaronic Priesthood activity program. The Duty to God Award is a priesthood award”. (From the Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth p.12)

This simple statement clarifies two very important principles. 1) There is a separation of the two programs. 2) Scouting is **part of** the activity program of the YM. The activity program for all the youth of the church is called Mutual. For young men mutual includes: Scouting, Duty to God, Combined activities and other quorum related activities such as Baptisms for the Dead, Sports, Firesides etc.

This can introduce some frustration on the part of YM leaders in that they may feel overwhelmed at the magnitude of what they are asked to do. This is something that I’ll address further in the section about Program Administration and following section on how to combine Duty to God and Scouting programs.

The Duty to God program has a very distinct purpose. The program actually began in the 90’s as a program for young men who lived in areas of the Church where the scouting program was not supported by the local wards. For example areas like South and Central America, Mexico and in parts of Europe and in Asia. In these places the Church does not officially sponsor scouting units. It is there that the current Duty to God program was born and refined so that Young Men could have goals and achievements to work toward

and recognition for their efforts. It is easy to see why some could mistakenly believe that the Duty to God program was going to replace scouting in the United States simply because it acted as an alternative for scouting in those other parts of the world.

The Duty to God program is very unique in that it can function on its own, or it can mesh very well into existing Scouting programs.

In the USA and Canada, YM activity programs are expected to utilize scouting programs and Duty to God programs with equal effectiveness.

Myth #3: BSA Training will show you how to implement the Duty to God Program.

“Every Young Man deserves a trained leader”

That is the mantra that prevails in the YM organizations of the church today. All too often it is understood to refer only to the following BSA led training programs: Fast Start, Basic Training, Leader Specific Training, and Outdoor Skills Training (these courses are what are required to wear the “TRAINED” patch on your adult scout uniform) & Wood Badge. While this training is great there is one key missing ingredient in that chain and that is **Priesthood Authority!** YM leaders require the training and tutelage of men who have been duly authorized by being set apart through the laying on of hands to administer the programs of the priesthood. This kind of training cannot be replaced or replicated in any other way.

BSA training is essential and key to the success of your scouting programs but all YM programs of the Church fall under the direction of the Priesthood. This is the line of authority through which revelation is received. This is a key concept that seems to have been neglected in many wards. As a member of a Stake YM Presidency, I receive my commission from the Stake President, and I act as an advisor to Bishops and ward YM leaders. On a ward level the Bishop holds those keys of administration as do the Presidents of the Teachers and Deacon’s Quorums. That is the Priesthood Line of Authority. That is how the Duty to God program is administered.

It is not the place, nor the commission of the BSA to administer the Duty to God program since it is not a scouting award, **NOR** should they be expected to.

Myth #4: The Duty to God award is easy to earn. All you have to do is go to church and give a few talks.

This myth stems from the requirements of the old Duty to God program. The old Duty to God scouting award was relatively easy to earn if a YM was active in Church on Sunday's and during the week. (see Appendix A)

The current Duty to God program is very different. It requires hard work and dedication. Earning the medallion takes six years of completing goals and difficult tasks. If a boy does all that is required he will have accomplished a lot. A small sampling of some of those requirements would include: reading the Book of Mormon twice, attended the temple regularly, been an active home teacher, holding and teaching regular Family Home Evenings. He will have maintained a regular physical fitness schedule, found information about career opportunities, participated in local political, artistic and cultural events. He will have had experience with full-time missionaries, less-active members of the church and studied Preach My Gospel, For the Strength of Youth and Gospel Principles. He will memorize study, set goals, exercise and teach regularly throughout the program.

This is no program for slackers, and you can't earn it just by coming to church and doing the bare minimum.

Myth #5: The Duty to God program does not require outdoor or physical activities; it is just a spiritual program.

Myth #4 addressed some of the difficult aspects of the current Duty to God program. Still one of the biggest complaints I hear from adults is that there are no outdoor or fitness requirements in this program. So I'd like to address that specifically.

My favorite way to discuss this issue is with the following example based on the Navy SEAL Fitness requirements for entrance into BUD/S training.

For those who don't know, Navy SEAL's are special operations forces for the United States Navy. Comparable to groups like the Green Beret, Delta Force, Army Rangers, RECON Marines, etc... SEAL stands for Sea, Air & Land and SEAL's are combat experts in any of those three arenas. These are tough, rough and extremely brave men who give their all for the defense of their country, their families and their freedom. They are a special breed, and they have to be extraordinarily fit to do the job they do.

BUD/S training is where a SEAL becomes a SEAL. BUD/S stands for Basic Underwater Demolition – SEAL. To be considered for BUD/S training each applicant must pass a series of tests among which is a physical fitness exam that consists of the following:

- 1 - Run 1.5 miles (in boots and long pants) in less than 11.5 minutes.
- 2 - Do 42 Pushup's in less than 2 minutes
- 3 - Do 50 sit-up's in less than 2 minutes
- 4 - Do 6 pull-up's
- 5 - Swim 500 yards in 12.5 minutes or less.

This is all done with short breaks in between each trial.

Now lets compare this to some of the physical fitness requirements from the Priest Duty to God Booklet. (Note that I said 'some', this is only part of it):

- 1 - Run 6 miles in less than 60 minutes
- 2 - Hike 15 miles with a full pack in two days or less
- 3 - Run for 30 minutes 3 times a week for 3 months
- 4 - Swim for 30 minutes twice a week for 3 months
- 5 - Play on an official sports team (can be church ball)
- 6 - Plan and execute a physical activity. Suggestions include: 30 mile biking trek, survival hike, whitewater rafting or distance run)

Now, the astute reader will say “yes, but the Duty to God does not require you to do it all at once.” And that is true. My point is that if a young man can maintain the level of fitness required for the Duty to God award for the amount of time required (3 months in most cases), then he’d have no problem passing the fitness exam for Navy SEAL BUD/S training. It takes 21 days for a person to form a habit. If a young man honestly does these physical fitness requirements, he has just established some very good fitness habits.

That is a physically strong young man.

In addition to the fitness requirements, there are opportunities for multiple camping activities that require that the young men plan, make arrangements for and execute the activity themselves.

Myth #6: There are no leadership skills developed by the Duty to God program.

It is true that the Duty to God program does not offer as many group leadership opportunities as the scouting program does but there are still a lot of areas of the award that focus on Leadership. There are service projects that require the boy to lead, quorum activities that require leadership and family activities that encourage the boy to lead out in his home. It is this last leadership role that truly matters most and is a central focus of the program. Of all the leadership roles that we are trying to prepare young men for, which is the most important? It is that of FATHER. After that all other leadership roles come in a very distant second.

Of all the titles that God could choose, the one he seems to prefer is that of ‘FATHER’.

The Bishop is often referred to as the ‘FATHER’ of the Ward.

The Sons of Helaman called their leader ‘FATHER’. These examples could go on and on.

Not all young men of the Church will be Bishops. Not all will be Elders Quorum Presidents. Not all will be military leaders, business

leaders, politicians or even scout leaders, but all (if they remain worthy) will be FATHERS, either in this life or the life to come.

A young man who is prepared to lead in his home will be more than prepared to lead in any other capacity that the Lord sees fit to call him to.

Myth #7: The program is only for the YM, not for leaders.

Only young men can earn the Medallion for their Duty to God. That does not mean that Fathers and Leaders can't do the requirements with them.

In the 2005 General Young Men's Open House - President Charles Dahlquist issued a challenge to all adult young men leaders of the Church to get their own Duty to God booklet and to do the requirements themselves, with their sons or with the boys of their quorum. Personally I took up that challenge. I'll tell you more about it in a later chapter, but I can tell you that I have a greater testimony of this program and what it can help young men achieve because I've been doing it and seen the growth in my own life.

As an adult leader, when you complete a requirement pass it off to you wife, one of your kids or to one of the young men in your quorum. You will be blessed for this I can promise you.

That hopefully clears up some of the more common myths surrounding this wonderful program. I would again testify that this program comes through inspiration. It was 'field tested' before being brought to us in the United States and it can work miracles in the lives of young men and their families. Just try it and see...I dare ya!

Section 2

What does "Duty to God" mean?

The sentiment 'duty to God and country' is a phrase that has been around for generations. It is simply one of those sayings that has origins that have been lost to history. It is often associated with men in military or political service. Most countries have a belief that they are guided and protected by the divine, and serving your country is also serving the God, who established that country. It is synonymous with words like honor, respect and courage. When I think of those words I always think of the TV commercial recruiting for the US Marine Corps. In my minds eye I see that Marine in his Dress Uniform holding the sword. He looks very sharp and undefeatable all at the same time.

Baden Powell used this sentiment of 'duty to God and country' as he formed what is now the Boy Scout movement. The Scout Oath he created states:

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.

So how does this sentiment apply to LDS culture and beliefs?
How does it tie into the foundations of our faith?

One way is taught by Alma the younger:

*"And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things that I might awaken you to a sense of your **duty to God**, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received." (Alma 7:22)*

It is interesting to note that this verse in The Book of Mormon is the only place in all of scripture that uses the exact phrase "duty to God". It is a powerful scripture when it is taken in context of the rest of the passage in which it is used.

This is the Alma who, as a young man, 'was going about...seeking to destroy the church" with the sons of Mosiah. After a powerful visit from an angel, they changed the course of their lives, repented and then dedicated their lives to reverse the harm they had done. The sons of Mosiah went on to serve as very, very powerful missionaries to the Lamanites. Alma stayed in Zarahemla to help his father in the work of the established Church among the Nephite people. By 91 B.C. he had become military, political and spiritual leader of the people. He was basically the 'president' of the country, the General of the army and the Prophet of the Church. In short...Alma was 'THE MAN'. To me he was very much like that US Marine from the commercial. He was steadfast and courageous; a living breathing symbol of DUTY.

By 83 B.C. (Alma chapter 4) Alma had witnessed the rise of anti-Christ's & priest crafts (Nehor) he saw the pre-cursors to the king-men (Amlici) and had led his people in two major wars that saw the destruction of tens of thousands of Nephite and uncounted Lamanite lives. Pride was again becoming a major stumbling block for his people. It was in this circumstance that Alma realized he could no longer divide his time between the secular and the spiritual. Wickedness and apostasy were creeping into the church, so he anointed Nephiah to replace him as Chief Judge and Alma decided to dedicate all his time to strengthening the members of the Church throughout the land. He starts this ministry in his home-town of Zarahemla (chapter 5-6) which was the capital of the Nephite lands. He quickly sees that there are lots of problems that need correcting among the members of the church there, both in doctrines being taught and in the behaviors of the people. In two verses of chapter 4 (v. 3 & 19) he mentions that the people were in need of being 'awakened to a sense of their duty', which duty he will explain in the context of the following chapters.

Chapter 6 tells us of the 'cleansing' and 'setting in order' of the church in Zarahemla. This means that Alma had to reprimand, correct, and ex-communicate many members of the church. This process of dealing with sin and repentance was surely taxing for Alma. One can only imagine the ache and sorrow he felt after having to do this work in the city of Zarahemla. The repentance process is emotionally taxing, for both the sinner and the ecclesiastical leader who walks the path of repentance with them.

Upon completion of this process, Alma went straight to the city of Gideon (Chapter 7) where he fully expected to encounter similar issues. When he arrived he was overjoyed to discover that the people in this city had been faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments. The sin and wickedness of Zarahemla had not found its way into Gideon. He was relieved to see that they were steady and immovable in doing what they had been taught. The joy Alma feels causes him to praise God (v. 4-7) and to prophesy concerning the Birth of the Jesus Christ (v. 7-10) and of his pain and suffering (v. 11-12) that he might he might bring about the atonement (v. 13).

Alma then goes on to teach the people about repentance, and how this is an ongoing, never-ending process for each and every one of us. In verse 21 Alma makes a very clear statement that God 'doth not dwell in unholy temples'. Meaning that if we are not making sincere effort to keep ourselves clean and pure, that the spirit of God cannot be our aid in life. He further states that: "the time shall come...that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness." There will come a day when it will be too late for us to change course in our lives and the atonement will have no effect for those who will not repent.

It is after this poignant verse that Alma states (v. 22) "I have said these things that I might awaken you to a sense of your **duty to God**".

What is the 'duty to God' that Alma is teaching us? It is: to be faithful, to be penitent and to use our lives for the building up of the

kingdom of God in whatever capacity he sees fit to use us in. In short, it is to be CONVERTED to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You may wonder, what does that mean to be converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ? Some may say to themselves: I've already been baptized. I go to church; I do the other ordinances that are required. I'm a good person. Isn't that enough?

Actually...not quite. It's a good start, but it is just the beginning.

In a landmark talk from 2002, Elder Richard G. Scott talked about being converted. In it he states:

"Stated simply, true conversion is the fruit of *faith, repentance,* and *consistent obedience*. *Faith* comes by hearing the word of God and responding to it. You will receive from the Holy Ghost a confirming witness of things you accept on *faith* by willingly doing them. You will be led to *repent* of errors resulting from wrong things done or right things not done. As a consequence, your capacity to *consistently obey* will be strengthened. This cycle of *faith, repentance,* and *consistent obedience* will lead you to greater conversion with its attendant blessings. True conversion will strengthen your capacity to do what you know you should do, when you should do it, regardless of the circumstances." (check on source for this talk)

Just as Alma taught in his address to the people of Gideon, first comes faith then repentance then obedience which lead us to want to change and become something new.

Earlier I referred to a talk from Elder Dalin H. Oaks titled "The Challenge to Become". The word "Become" in the title refers to the need for us to become converted to the gospel. to paraphrase his words; it isn't enough to know the gospel (knowing), or even to simply practice it (doing) but that the principles and precepts of the gospel must become part of our lives. It must become part of who we are.

He says:

"We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see 1 Cor. 13). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, "the pure love of Christ" (Moro. 7:47), is not an *act* but a *condition* or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, "except men shall *have* charity they cannot inherit" the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father (Ether 12:34; emphasis added). "

With that in mind, let's go back to our scripture in Alma about our duty to God (Alma 7:22). Again Alma states "I tell you these things that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God" Now read verses 23-24:

23. And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever you do receive.

24. And see that you have faith, hope and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works.

I submit to you that this is the very definition of being converted. That is the outline of your Duty to God.

Alma was a great example of an honorable man. He was valiant in defending the cause of freedom among his people, even when his own blood had been spilt (Alma 3:22). He sustained and obeyed the law of the land, upholding it as ruler and Chief Judge. Yet his highest

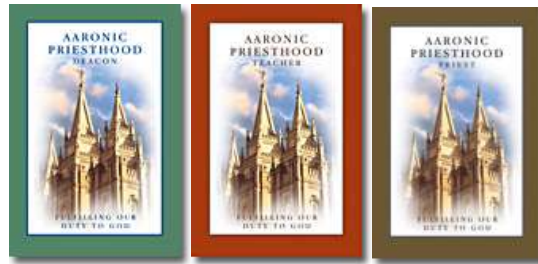
and most noble **duty** was to his Father in Heaven to whom he owed not only his allegiance but also his very existence. Alma's highest duty was to serve God and teach the people of Nephi to walk with uprightness before God. It is fascinating to consider that in his early years, this was not so. Alma was as wicked as they come; yet he changed the course of his life...maybe we can too.

Every time Alma mentions the word 'duty' it is preceded by words like 'awaken' 'stir-up' and 'remember'. There is an important lesson in this that is relevant to our discussion of what "Duty to God" means to each of us personally as priesthood holders. Sometimes we need to shake ourselves out of our easy chairs and get moving to stir-up our spirits. So...get moving and 'DO IT NOW!' (Spencer W. Kimball)

Section 3

What does the award represent?

The Duty to God award is actually made up of four separate awards.



There are three certificates and one medallion. The certificates are earned as a boy completes the Deacon, Teacher and Priest booklets respectively. If a young man earns all three certificates then he is then awarded the medallion.



EARNING THE CERTIFICATES:

When a young man enters any quorum (Deacon, Teacher or Priest) he should be welcomed into that quorum by a visit from the quorum president and the adult advisors. In this visit he should be given a copy of the booklet that corresponds with the quorum he is going to enter. For deacons there should also be an orientation to the Duty to God program and what it takes to earn the award. Time should be taken to go over the booklet with the boy and his parents. Explain the four areas of emphasis (Priesthood Duties, Family Activities, Quorum Activities & Personal Goals). Take the time

needed to answer questions. This would also be a good time to invite Dad to work with the boy on the award as well as talk about how you will track progress.

In my experience there is a lot of frustration in tracking Duty to God progress. Part of this frustration comes from the boys constantly loosing their booklets and part of it comes from the hundred different ways there are available for tracking progress.

Some of those tracking methods include:

- 1) The standard tracking sheet available at LDS Distribution Centers. This method is somewhat flawed in that it lists the old set of requirements from when the program was first started in 2000. It has changed slightly since then, and at this writing the sheets have not yet been updated.
<http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=e9c4d7f57d716010VgnVCM1000004e94610aRCRD&locale=0>
- 2) If you know how to use Microsoft Excel you can create some good spreadsheets.
- 3) Printable forms from www.dutytogod.com I used these for a long time. I liked the layout and ease of use.
- 4) There are posters available at www.dutytogodposters.com that a boy can hang in his room. These make a great resource for personal interviews between boy and dad. (Yes DAD you are supposed to be interviewing your kids on a regular basis. For a tip on how to get into this see Appendix B) you can keep track of things on that poster and transfer the info to any booklet.

The booklets are designed to fit into your standard size scripture bag very nicely. Getting Young Men to bring their scriptures to church is a whole other problem. My experience has shown that if you require them to use their scriptures on a regular basis, most of the boys will bring them. Now what about this excuse that "I left my scriptures at seminary". Well those boys should be bringing their scriptures home from seminary and reading them every night shouldn't they? If they are leaving them at seminary then they aren't really doing what they are supposed to be doing. This might be a

good time to suggest a birthday or Christmas present idea to Mom and Dad. You can purchase perfectly good sets of paperback scriptures for very little money (link to distribution center) that the boys can leave at seminary, then they can still bring their scriptures to church with them and keep their Duty to God books in those scriptures. Ta-da...problem solved.

I realize that this isn't always going to work, but it ought to be encouraged.

Once a young man has completed all three certificates he is presented with the Medallion.



When you earn the Duty to God medallion you are presented with a nice Mahogany box. Inside the box you will find a brass coin that is about 1 3/4" in diameter. On one side of the coin is an engraving of the spires of the Salt Lake Temple, with the words "Aaronic Priesthood: Duty to God" around it. On the back is an engraving of John the Baptist giving Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Aaronic Priesthood. It is a beautiful award and holds a lot of meaning, both for the boy personally as well as in the symbolism of the award.

The first question I am always asked about this award is "why the coin?"

Recently I was given a large coin in recognition for a project that I was involved in at work. While it was a neat looking coin I wondered what the point of it was. Especially since I was wondering the same thing about the Duty to God medallion at that time. When I asked the man who gave me the coin (a retired Air Force Colonel) he looked at me strangely and said "Haven't you ever heard of a

'challenge coin'?" I replied that I hadn't, so he gave me a quick lesson that I'll share with you here.

The tradition of awarding: coins of merit, challenge coins or medallions have several different origins. Some say it was started by Napoleon as an incentive to his troops. Some say it began during the Civil war. Others say it was the Romans who started it all.

The most popular story and most agreed upon as the origin of the "coin" awards is about a World War I pilot.

Aerial combat was a new thing during the First World War. Initially created by the United States Army, the U.S. Army Air Service was manned with volunteer pilots from varying backgrounds. Some pilots were uneducated boys from the farm and others were Ivy League educated men from well to do families in the North Eastern states.

The story is that one such wealthy Ivy League Lieutenant ordered some small; solid bronze medallions (or coins) struck with his squadron insignia on them. He then presented the coins to the members of his squadron as a memento of their service together, and as a way to unify the various members of his group. The coin was gold plated and quite valuable.

One pilot in the squadron had never owned such a valuable item and determined to keep it in a small leather pouch that he wore around his neck. One day while engaged in combat his plane was damaged and he was forced to land behind enemy lines whereupon he was captured by German soldiers. All his personal belongings were confiscated including any identification that he was carrying, but his captors missed the leather pouch around his neck and he was taken as a prisoner of war. En route to the prison facility, he was held overnight in a small German-held, French village. It just so happened that that village was bombed that night by the British and this pilot was able to escape during the confusion of the bombardment.

This pilot was able to disguise himself in civilian attire, and evaded being captured again by the Germans, but he had no way to prove his identity. Eventually he was able to sneak back across the battle lines and make contact with a French patrol. Unfortunately for him, the French were on the lookout for German saboteurs dressed as civilians. This pilot was mistaken as a German spy and they immediately prepared to execute him on the spot.

In a desperate attempt to prove that he was an American pilot and was an ally to the French, he pulled out the coin that was still around his neck and showed it to his French captors. One of the Frenchmen recognized the insignia of his squadron and the execution was delayed long enough for them to verify his real identity and return the pilot safely to his unit.

Once the pilot was safely back with his squadron, it became a tradition for every member of the unit to carry their coin at all times. To make sure that all members complied, the pilots would challenge each other to produce their coin at any given moment. If a unit member failed to show their coin, then they were to buy a drink for the challenger. That is the origin of what is now referred to as the "challenge coin" that has become popular not only in the military, but also among professional organizations, firefighters, police officers, and business'. One little known fact is that the Utah Symphony was one of the first non-government organizations to award coin's to its members.

The coin challenge has evolved over the years from buying drinks, to buying meals, candy, or other items that are agreed upon by the members of the organization that the coin represents. The basic rules are this:

- a) The Challenge can occur at any time.
- b) The Challenge begins when the challenger draws his coin and shows to the other challenge. A variation on this is that you must drop it on a table so that everyone in the room can hear it.

- c) The person being challenged must then produce his coin as well. If he fails to do so, he must buy you a food item or beverage of your choice.
- d) If he does happen to produce his coin, you are then obliged to purchase him a food item or beverage of his choice.
- e) The challenge can involve as many team members as are present at the time of the challenge.

I was not personally involved with the decision on the part of the Church to create the Duty to God medallion. I can't say what determined its appearance. I have only sought here to describe where the tradition of such awards has come from, and why it is significant. Of all the awards that young men can earn during their time in the Aaronic Priesthood, this medallion is the only one that they can carry with them throughout the rest of their lives. Imagine if you will, 20-30 years in the future, when a major portion of the Melchizedek Priesthood will have earned this award for themselves. Won't it be cool to see coin challenges going on during Bishopric meetings, High Priest meeting or Elders Quorum? Don't you think that the young men who see this going on will have a very strong desire to be a part of it? Can you imagine the brotherhood formed by this simple process? There will be a great sense of belonging that comes from having the common, binding thread.

I'd like to take a moment to talk about the symbolism on the coin itself:



The front of the coin is adorned with an engraving of the Salt Lake City Temple, similar to the temple image on the front of the Duty to God booklets, the For The Strength Of Youth Booklet, the Young Women's Personal Progress booklet and pendant. This image has come to symbolize our faith throughout the world. Not only is this building one with an amazing history and spirit but it also serves as a symbol of the eternal nature of our faith. We know that our life here on earth is no

accident, nor do we believe that our life ends with our physical death. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We know that there is much more to our existence than our mortal stay on Earth.

For as long as I can recall (decades) the prophets have counseled us to have "reminders of our covenants" displayed in our homes, offices and other places where we can see them. I don't think I know of a Latter Day Saint home that does not have some photos or paintings of the temples displayed prominently on the walls. Many even have other things like "The Proclamation to the World on the Family", Photographs of the current Prophet and even sculptures of the Savior and other reminders of their covenants on display. They all serve to call to memory the things that we hold sacred and close to our hearts.

While attending a recent Stake Priesthood meeting, a member of our Stake Presidency posed the following question to us as Young Men's leaders of the stake: "What can we do in our callings to encourage families to attend the temple?" That was a tough one for us, because as leaders of Young Men, our scope is limited to only one part of those families. We talked about doing Baptisms for the Dead and things like that and the lesson went on. His question persisted in my mind however and as we left the meeting and I was walking home. Along the way I put my hand in my pocket and felt a Duty to God medallion there that I had used in a lesson earlier that day. Suddenly the answer struck me so strongly that I had to stop walking and stand there for a moment. Here in my pocket was the answer to his question: **If we as Young Men's leaders were to more effectively use the Duty to God program with our young men, their families wouldn't stand a chance!**

This is why:

If the young men of the Church are actively pursuing their Duty to God awards, they are doing a lot of things at home with their Parents, brothers and sisters. They will be holding regular family home evenings, they will be holding family and personal prayers, they will be doing service for family and neighbors, they will reading

books like; the Book of Mormon, Gospel Principles, For The Strength of Youth, Preach My Gospel and many others, they will be actively attending their Mutual activities and other marvelous and engaging activities. In short, they will be pointing their lives toward the temple and being a part of an eternal family.

I almost felt a twinge of pity for an inactive or partially active family that has a son who is really trying to earn his Duty to God award, their lives would be completely altered in such a dramatic fashion that it makes your head spin. Of course it would be a change for the better and would result in a family bound for eternity. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing? Imagine for a moment too, what that would mean to that young man who through his faith and diligence brought his family the joy of the gospel. How powerful would that boy be as a full-time missionary for the Lord? He would literally be unstoppable. Having tasted the "fruit" that is more "desirable" than any other, he would spread the gospel message like wildfire.

That is a spiritually strong young man.



The back side of the medallion features an engraving of John the Baptist with his hands on the head of Joseph Smith with Oliver Cowdery kneeling beside them, head bowed as John gives Joseph the Aaronic Priesthood.

This solemn event took place on May 15th 1829 along the banks of the Susquehanna River. It is recorded in the Pearl of Great Price (Joseph Smith History 1:68-74) and D&C section 13. There is a great deal of significance to this very quiet and very unheralded event.

While the world went on with the major historical events of the time that we read about in history books, the Priesthood and power of God was being restored to mankind in the woods of Pennsylvania. Shortly after this event; Peter, James and John visited Joseph and

Oliver and bestowed the Melchizedeck Priesthood on them as well restoring the fullness of the priesthood keys to mankind.

D&C 13 is a very short and poignant verse of scripture. You can memorize it in a few minutes (Duty to God requirement), but it takes a lot of thought and contemplation to understand it.

John says:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

There exists some controversy about the engraved image on the medallion because of John’s use of the word ‘servants’ (plural) and some early Church commissioned artwork that shows John placing his hands on both of their heads at the same time. I’d like to address this before I go much further.

According to the most current research available from the “Joseph Smith Papers” it is believed that John actually conferred the Priesthood upon Joseph first, ordained him the first Priest of the Latter-days and then performed the same ordinance on Oliver Cowdery. This is why all current artistic depictions of this event only show John performing the ordinance on Joseph with Oliver by his side (missionary flip charts, the Duty to God medallion, etc...)

As to his use of the plural ‘servants’, I can only say the following: When I was set apart as a councilor in the Stake Young Men’s Presidency, there were blessings offered by the stake president that applied to our entire presidency and he used plural terms in referring to all of us even though he had his hands on my head alone. When I have placed my hands on another’s head to offer a blessing of healing I have often taken that opportunity to use my priesthood to bless others in the family, or doctors who are working

with that patient...even though my hands are on the sick person's head I am authorized to use that opportunity to bless many.

Such is the case here I believe. Because John was addressing them both, he used the plural form of the word even though he was only performing the ordinance one at a time. This is not uncommon.

So, back to the scripture.

It is very interesting to contemplate this event and the keys that are returned to earth in this verse of scripture. Lets take a moment to talk about them and their significance.

The keys to the ministering of angels.

This is possibly one of the most mysterious and misunderstood keys restored in this passage of scripture. Do you realize that these keys are exercised by the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood every single Sunday?

In the October 1998 General Conference of the Church, Elder Dalin H. Oaks taught that by the worthy administration of the ordinance of the Sacrament, the boys of the Aaronic Priesthood use their God given authority to facilitate the ministering of angels to the members of the congregation. Through 12 year old boys, angels are permitted to speak to and minister to the members of your wards! That is incredible! In your ward, these keys are held by the Deacon's Quorum President. Where else on Earth do you find a faith that places such a magnificent blessing on a 12-13 year old? Answer: you don't.

I also believe that this ministering of angels is achieved by the gathering of Fast Offerings. By performing this important Priesthood function, members of the Church act as angels to other members in need.

There is also the opportunity for a young man to receive this ministering of angels on a personal level and I can attest to the

truthfulness of this fact. It occurs daily around the world as angels are among us doing the work of the Lord.

This is all achieved by the authority and keys of the Aaronic Priesthood.

The keys to the Gospel of repentance.

When a young man reaches the age of 14 he is eligible to become a Teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. The meaning of this Priesthood office is clear from its name, he is to teach. To this end he is assigned to be a Home Teacher as well as other duties that involve teaching the gospel.

What is he supposed to teach?

The Gospel of Repentance. The word "gospel" means literally "good news", so the Young Men of the Church are giving the keys to spread the good news of repentance and the atonement.

How does a young man do this? D&C 11:21 – "Seek not to declare my word, but seek first to obtain it." To fully understand and exercise these keys of the Priesthood requires diligent study, prayer, fasting and doing your duty. Then you are ready to teach.

The keys to baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

At the age of 16 a young man can be ordained to the office of Priest. With this office comes the authority to baptize under the direction of the Bishop.

According to Hebrew tradition, the Priest was the mediator between God and man. He would officiate at the altar for those who came to the temple to offer their sacrifices. Likewise, the Priest of today officiates at the sacrament table in administering the ordinance of the sacrament. As we partake of the sacrament we are renewing the covenant that we made when we were baptized members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. These keys to baptism

are not only exercised by the Priest who performs the ordinance but also by those Priests who officiate at the sacrament table. Their Priesthood keys is what allows us to renew those baptismal covenants. They are the conduit through which the ordinance is validated in the sight of God.

A heavy responsibility to be sure and one that should never be taken lightly.

And to think that we give all that responsibility and privilege to boys from 12-18 years of age. That is truly awesome. These are powerful young men. They deserve an award like the Duty to God medallion for their valiant efforts.

Section 4

Who Administers the Program & How to Present the Awards

To understand the administration of the Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty To God program, it is important at the outset to remind ourselves of the “Three P’s of Program Administration”. They are (in order) **P**inciples, **P**eople and **P**rograms.

All programs of the Church serve a primary function to teach correct principles. Principles are eternal and constant. An example of a Principle is: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a principle upon which our testimonies are founded because it will never change. The programs of the Church whether they be Relief Society, Elders Quorum, Boy Scouts, Duty to God or Primary Achievement Days all serve as a vehicle for teaching correct principles.

Of course all of these programs are in place to serve the needs of the People in helping them gain an understanding of these correct principles. The General Authorities of the church carefully consider what programs will best aid them in helping to meet the needs of the people in this regard. There are many good programs to choose from and the leadership carefully considers their options before bestowing a stamp of approval on those programs. That is why the Church does not sponsor Tiger Scouts, for boys under the age of 8 or Girl Scout troops for Young Women. While worthy in many ways the Church has decided that the aims and goals they have in mind for those particular groups are not best served by those organizations. This does not mean that you can’t enroll your child in these programs it simply means that the Church does not sponsor these units.

People’s needs vary around the world and the change with time. What worked 30 years ago, may not work so well now. We see that with Scouting as they have adapted the needs of the program to accommodate the changing needs of boys throughout the years. When I was a young man, there was no such thing as Venturing or

Varsity Scouting. That is a fairly recent development to fill changing needs.

It is the same in the Church. The Duty to God program as it was does not meet the needs of the young men of the Church today. So it was changed. It no longer falls under the jurisdiction of the BSA, but rather is administered by the authority of the Priesthood.

Programs are on the flexible end of the scale of the three P's of administration. Where principles never change, programs come and go. As it stands now (and for the foreseeable future) the LDS Church in the United States and Canada has declared that Scouting is a fully endorsed *program*, as is the Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God *program*. We are expected to participate in both with equal effectiveness. If things change, and peoples needs change, it may become necessary for the Church to alter what it is doing. That will all hinge on what best helps teach correct principles to help the people gain eternal salvation. If there comes a day when the Church deems the Duty to God program does not meet it's needs, then they will do something else. The same goes for Scouting. For now, this is the course as it has been set and it works very well where effectively implemented.

All programs of the Church fall under the direction and inspiration of the Priesthood and will be that way forever. The Priesthood is the guiding power of government for the Kingdom of God on earth and in heaven. This is an eternal *principle* that will never change.

There is an order to the Priesthood that is an essential part to understanding the administration of the Duty to God program. All priesthood power and authority is derived from keys given to specific individuals for the governing of the Church on the earth. The President of the Church is the only single individual who holds all of the active keys upon the earth. Being only one man in a world-wide church necessitates that he delegate keys to other men to help keep order in the Church. With those keys comes power and authority to act in the name of God and receive revelation for that office. There is an eternal principle based on this line of authority that when power

flows through these channels blessings flow from heaven and miracles happen! (D&C 130:20-21)

For example: as a member of the Stake Young Men's Presidency I hold no keys of administration. My authority comes through the Stake President and I act under his direction. If he tells me that, as the first councilor, I am to be in the Teacher's Quorums of the stake seeing to their needs and helping the Quorum advisors by encouraging them to carry on in their callings then I have power and authority to do just that. Of course the Bishop is the President of the Aaronic Priesthood in his ward and I always make sure it is OK with him first. (Though I have never had one tell me that I can't visit his ward YM organization). It is the same on a ward level. As Young Men's leaders, we hold no keys of administration. Those keys reside with the Bishop, the Teacher's Quorum President and the Deacon's Quorum President respectively. Therein lies the keys to administration of the Duty to God program. NO ONE ELSE is authorized to administer this program.

In the General Handbook of Instructions it states that:

"While responsibility for Scouting rest primarily at the ward level (Bishops), stake presidencies encourage bishopricks to train ward Scout leaders, and offer the support of stake leaders in training. Bishopricks may request through the stake presidency the assistance of the stake Young Men or the stake Primary Presidencies. Additionally, the Boy Scouts of America sponsors Basic Training and other courses to help leaders learn Scouting methods and skills. Scouting leaders may enroll in these courses to supplement training from local priesthood leaders." (General Handbook of Instructions - Scouting Section P.1)

This very clearly states an order to the training of young men's leaders and to the administration of the programs within the Church. That order goes as follows:

- 1) Bishop**
- 2) Stake YM Presidency by delegation from Stake President**
- 3) BSA Training**

Why this order? I thought if we just sent our YM leaders to BSA Training (Fast Start, Basic, Outdoor Skills, Youth Protection etc...) that is all they needed, what's the big deal?

'The big deal' is the Priesthood Line of Authority.

Again, let me clarify that **I firmly believe in BSA training** in order to have a good, functioning scout *program*. I also firmly believe that what the BSA teaches is incomplete when it comes to LDS Scouting programs.

President Monsen is quoted as having said "From the Bishop down it is all work, and from the Bishop up it is all talk", and he is right. The Bishop is the pivotal piece in a well functioning young men's program. It is his call that determines who will be involved in these programs. He knows what the young men need better than any other leader. They are his flock, his 'sons', his charge. When he calls a young men's leader he needs to be the first line of training when it comes to the very specific needs of his quorum. In addition he holds the keys to revelation for the members of his ward, and specifically for the Aaronic Priesthood quorums in his charge. This inspiration and vision needs to be shared with the men he calls to serve as Presidency and advisors to the boys, and with the boys he calls to preside over each quorum.

The bishop is not alone in this training though. He has resources at his disposal in the form of the Stake Young Men's Presidency. While the Stake Young Men's Presidency is not directly responsible for implementing the young men's programs in the stake, they are responsible to assist and advise the adult leaders of the wards and branches of the stake in their callings. The main responsibility of the stake young men's presidency is to teach (the "all talk" part of Pres. Monsen's quote) the adult leaders about their callings.

Nobody expects the Bishop to be an expert in all the aspects of scouting, Duty to God, sports and all the other activities that the young men are involved in, so the Stake President calls men who do know these things to serve on the stake level.

Let me illustrate how this works with a personal experience.

I've indicated before that I currently serve as the 1st councilor in the Stake Young Men's Presidency. As such I have been given charge over the Teacher's Quorums and Varsity Scout Teams in the Stake. I try to visit each quorum quarterly and maintain a good relationship with the leaders as well as the boys.

Recently a bishop from one of the wards contacted me with a frustration that his Varsity Scouting program wasn't working as well as he'd have hoped and wondered if I could come and do some teaching/training of his leaders. I called the Stake President and asked him if he would approve of me doing this which he did, so I called the Bishop back and instructed him to set up the meeting, call the leaders to attend and that I would be there as his guest presenter. HERE IS THE KEY: it was the Bishop's meeting not mine, not the Stake President's but it was called and presided over by the Bishop. By adhering to the proper line of authority I attest that a miracle occurred.

Before the meeting I spent a good deal of time in prayer seeking the guidance of the spirit in what I could present to these men. I wanted to create an open environment where all kinds of things could be discussed and where the leaders were free to ask any question that they desired.

So we held the meeting, I presented my materials and things went pretty well. I'd like to point out that of the men present I could tell at the outset of the meeting there were two in particular that didn't want to be there. We planned for the meeting to go for 1 to 1.5 hours...it became a 3 hour spiritual feast. What happened? In short, the Spirit took over. At one point I just stood back and watched. I wasn't saying a word. The spirit was doing all the talking. Because this meeting was conducted in proper order, and by the authority of the Priesthood, the Spirit of the Lord was able to enter that classroom and took control of the meeting. It washed over everyone in that room.

Here is the proof of the effectiveness.

Within a few short months, I was stopped at the grocery store by one of those two men who didn't seem to want to be at that meeting and he excitedly told me "we are inspired..and our quorum is reaping an amazing harvest". When I inquired about it from the Bishop he informed me that his Varsity Scouting program was soaring. Within that short time frame they earned: 11 Varsity Letters, 40 Varsity Pins and 8 Denali Awards! Not only that but they had 4 Eagle Scouts, 5 Life Scouts and EVERY teacher in his quorum was earning their Duty to God certificate. Activity was up, the boys were engaged and having a lot of fun while learning from the spirit. A Miracle had occurred!

I testify that this is due to the power of the Priesthood and following the line of authority outlined in the General Handbook of Instructions.

This brings us back to the awards themselves. With proper administration and authority, the boys will be earning their awards. How do you go about presenting them?

Turn again to the Guidebook For Parents And Leaders Of Youth page 12. There it states that certificates should be presented either in quorum meetings or during Priesthood meeting opening exercises. The presentation of certificates is not appropriate during Sacrament Meeting. Being that it is not a scouting recognition it is not appropriate for a court of honor either.

Usually the Bishop or member of the Bishopric will present the Certificate to the boy, and is encouraged to say a few words about what the boy did to earn it. The Young Men should be encouraged to say something if they'd like too as well. Keep it short and sweet.

Presentation of the Medallion on the other hand is encouraged for Sacrament Meetings. It is commonly done by the Bishop, as he is the President of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward. This is a big deal for the boy's and they deserve the recognition of the whole ward. I see nothing wrong with having the young man who is receiving this medallion give a talk about what he had to do to earn the award as a youth speaker. This is a moment that a young man

will have to spend 6 years working toward. Go ahead...make a big deal, just do it with the right spirit.

Section 5

The Joint Roles of Duty to God and Scouting



I stated earlier that In the USA and Canada, YM activity programs are expected to utilize scouting programs and Duty to God programs (along with all other programs of the Church) with equal effectiveness. This is no small task.

This was really brought home to me when I was recently approached by a frustrated Scoutmaster who told me that he was really irritated with this situation. He attended BSA training and they taught him how to use his weekly activities to run an effective program. In order to do it the way he was taught he needed every week of the month just for scouting. In reality he was lucky to get two weeks a month because of combined activities and the other quorum activities that also occurred on a regular basis. His lament was: "How am I supposed to do what the BSA is teaching me when I don't have enough time?" The only answer I had for him was to quote from Elder Ballard when he was asked which is more important, Duty to God or Scouting? His reply was "The Priesthood". I instructed that diligent scoutmaster that his job was to build men from boys, and that his program needed to adapt to the needs of the

quorum and not the other way around. This is never easy, but it can be done very effectively.

I am convinced that LDS YM/Scout leaders are called to be Super-men. Not only do they have to see to the needs of a very complex scouting program, but they have to manage the complex Duty to God program, balance combined activities, teach on Sundays, minister to the 'lost sheep', be faithful husbands and fathers, dedicated employee's and somewhere in there see to their own spiritual needs. This is a high and noble calling. It is one that is often filled with overwhelmed men who simply need a helping hand themselves.

Now with all that said, I also believe that inspiration has guided the development of the Duty to God program because there is significant overlap in the operation of this program in conjunction with the BSA programs. I spent nearly five years as a Varsity Coach before I realized how much I could accomplish with one activity. It does not take extensive knowledge of the programs, but it does require knowing your resources and where to look. Every Young Men's leader should have and know the following:

- 1) Duty to God booklets: Every young men's leader should have a copy of all three booklets and be familiar with what is inside of each booklet. You don't need to memorize them, but be familiar enough to know what kinds of activities are in there, and be able to quickly glance through the booklet to find those activities.
- 2) Boy Scout Handbook: as with the Duty to God books, be very familiar with what this book contains. For Varsity leaders you should also have the Varsity Scouting Handbook, and both Varsity and Venturing leaders should have the Ranger/Venturing Handbook. Be familiar enough with the books to be able to access in the information inside when you need it.
- 3) It is also mandatory for every member of the Young Men's presidency to have a copy of the Aaronic Priesthood section

of the General Handbook of Instructions along with the Scouting section published by the Church.

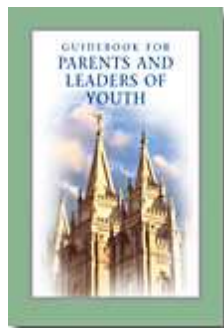
- 4) The Guide to Safe Scouting: anytime there is a possible safety concern or issue, this book will answer nearly every question that may arise. It is also my understanding that the Church stands firmly by the policies outlined in this book. If the Guide to Safe Scouting prohibits an activity it is certain that the Church will not approve of it either.

<http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/GSS.aspx>

- 5) For The Strength of Youth pamphlet. Every person in the Church should have and be familiar with this booklet. It contains priceless information about life and being a righteous member of God's kingdom.



- 6) Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth. Again, this is a priceless resource for any member of the Church, youth leader or otherwise.



Being familiar with those resources you can begin to observe overlap in programs. When you plan activities you can start to see where you might be able to accomplish several requirements at once.

I believe in three maxims regarding youth activities: 1) Activities should be things that the kids would probably not go out

and do on their own. 2) Leaders should never do anything for the youth that they can't do for themselves. 3) You should be able to accomplish multiple requirements with each activity. I am a big fan of doing several things at one time so every time we would plan an activity I'd pull out my resources and look them over to see what requirements were met by doing that activity. It only takes a few minutes and I was amazed at how many there were. (I still do this with Stake activities. Every time we plan something for the Youth, I have out my Duty to God booklets and I am looking for a requirement that the young men can pass off).

For instance: for a young man to earn his First Class Scout rank he must, among other things, show how to prepare a meal for the group and show that he knows how to safely clean and prepare vegetables and fruits. Well, there is a similar requirement in the Duty to God booklet for Deacons (p. 21 # 4). Doing this also fulfills some of the requirements for the Cooking Merit Badge. Why not do them all at the same time?

There are hundreds of similar things that you can accomplish and plan for. You will soon find that you are getting far more done than you ever thought possible when you get your programs working together like that. In addition the young men will see the benefit of their activities actually accomplishing something.



As a Varsity Scout leader, I took full advantage of the Varsity Scout letter and pins. Officially there are no requirements for the pins, so I used the Duty to God booklet to award pins too. If we accomplished specific requirements in the Duty to God book, I would

award pins for them. For instance, in our Stake we play basketball every winter as a Church league. For boys who participated in 75% of games and practices, I not only signed them off on their Duty to God requirement to play on a sports team, but I'd also award them the



basketball pin for their Varsity letter. This served to accomplish two things: One – they started attending the Court’s of Honor more regularly to get their awards and two - because they were there seeing other boys earn awards it inspired them to finish up the work they needed to do on their Eagle Scout rank. I had two boys earn their Eagle and I didn’t do any of it other than give them a few pins.



One thing that I’d like to point out to all Varsity Scout and Teachers Quorum leaders. If you have boys who are already Eagle Scouts, you can register them jointly as Varsity and Venture Scouts. Why do this? Well, once registered as a Venture, the boy can begin to work on the very difficult and prestigious Ranger Award. This award represents quite an achievement, and can rarely be earned in less than 2 years.

In addition to overlap, you will notice that at the end of each section of the Duty To God booklets, there are several blank lines. These are there so that you can create customized requirements based on the needs of the boy. Circumstances vary and some boys simply can’t do certain things. That is where you can make-up different opportunities for each boy based on their respective needs. For instance, there is a boy in our stake with Down’s Syndrome. He obviously can’t perform on the same level as other boys his age in athletic events or on an academic level. He can, however, be eligible to earn his Duty to God award and should be encouraged to do so. You also may be participating in a particular activity that you feel merits some recognition, and you can add that to the Duty to God booklets as a requirement for the boys. This is one of the beauties of this program is the ability to customize it and make it work for your particular situation. Like I’ve said before it is inspired.

Section 6

Raising the Bar for Everyone

Now, having covered some of the structure of the Duty to God program, I'd like to spend some time motivating boys and leaders to reach for something more, to work harder and to aspire to something higher with this wonderful program.

At the end of Section 2 I closed with the thought that every time Alma mentioned the word 'duty' he precedes it with the words 'awaken', 'stir-up' and 'remember'. This chapter issues that call to all men, young and old, parents, youth leaders & families...

...AWAKE, ARRISE AND BE MEN!

Early in the Book of Mormon Lehi is speaking to his sons prior to his passing away. As he teaches them he address' Laman and Lemuel with the following phrase:

"...now that my soul might have joy in you...arise from the dust my sons, and be men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart...Awake my sons and put on the armor of righteousness. Shake off the chains with which ye are bound..."

2 Nephi 1:21-23

What a powerful image! Rise from the dust. Clean yourself off. Be determined and unified. Wake up, get prepared. Shake off the binding chains that are holding you down.

"Rise up oh men of God, have done with lesser things, give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of Kings." (Hymn # 324)

Often in our daily pursuits we find ourselves being distracted and taken over by 'lesser' things. We find ourselves occupied with things that are possibly good, but we most likely could be doing

things that are great. There is an old saying that "evil wins when good men do nothing" that Brother John Bytheway improved on to say "evil wins when good men do something else". Too often those things lead us away from the greater things of the spirit, and lull us into a false sense of security.

Nephi teaches about this in 2 Nephi 28:21 & 24:

21. And others will he pacify, and lull them away into a carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well - and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

24. Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!

It is in small and subtle ways that Satan tears us down. He will find weak moments when we are tired, discouraged, downtrodden, frustrated or feeling alone. He'll exploit this weakness with phrases like 'you deserve this', 'a little wont hurt', 'it doesn't hurt anybody', 'you have agency make up your own mind', & 'you can always repent'. Even among young men's leaders he is very subtly trying to convince us that we need to lower standards to get YM to participate in activities (if you think that movie parties, LAN parties, paint-balling or air-softing are acceptable activities...think again. None of those activities are approved by the Church or by the BSA). He tells us that we spend too much time teaching gospel messages and that church is boring to these boys, that if we don't do fun and entertaining things that the boys will not come back. He tells us that the boys will be better off if we don't 'shove the gospel down their throats'. He tells us that 'fellowshipping' is an acceptable Priesthood Purpose to our activities so that we can justify almost any kind of outing. (I wish someone would show me where "Fellowshipping" is a stated Priesthood Purpose because I have yet to find it in anywhere). He tells us that we don't need to prepare stimulating lessons, because the boys know everything already. He tells us that young men aren't interested in the things of the spirit or scouting. Even in the calling of young men's leaders we often place greater emphasis on someone's ability to entertain youth than we do on their testimony, their enthusiasm for the gospel or their spiritual capacity.

Those are the kinds of things that lull us into that 'carnal sense of security' that makes us feel like that we can be 'at ease in Zion'. Little do we know that we are being overcome with that 'awful sleep of hell' that is difficult to awaken from. Laman and Lemuel couldn't do it, even with Lehi's many warnings.

So how do you "ARISE AND BE MEN"? How can we shake off those chains? Lehi gave them the key that is to **put on the armor of righteousness!** (see also: Ephesians 6:11-18 & D&C 27:11-18) I could write a whole book on the subject of the Armor of God, but I think that we are all familiar enough with the symbolism that I don't need to touch much on the subject. If you'd like to learn about it I suggest visiting <http://armorofgodcards.com/index.html> Putting on the Armor of Righteousness is more visual way of telling us to 'become converted'.



I am convinced that in the pre-mortal existence I must have been some kind of special operations commando or special agent during the war in heaven. When I face life's challenges I choose to look at my life as an ongoing war broken down into daily battles in which I am a **WARRIOR**. As a father I am also a platoon leader. As a young men's leader I am a unit commander etc. Each day I have to get myself prepared to do battle with an overwhelming horde of enemy forces. How do you prepare for battle like that? Well, here are my thoughts:

One key is in the word "WARRIOR". A warrior is something more than just a average soldier.

In Section 1 I introduced you to the Navy SEAL's. They are highly trained and specialized warriors. These guys are simply amazing. You don't hear much about their exploits because most of what they do is highly classified. They usually operate behind enemy lines and in very small teams of 4 - 20 men. They are very intelligent, they are rigorously trained and they are highly effective in doing their job. Among their creed's is to never leave a man behind. They function as a team, and their lives depend on each team member giving it his all.

I also told you that to become a SEAL, you have to get through what they call BUD/S school. This is some of the toughest training known to man. Most people find it insane what these men are put through but when they are done, they can hold their heads high knowing that they are among the best of the best. They are a full-fledged SEAL. They are awarded this pin:



That becomes a visual reminder and symbol of who they are and what they stand for. This pin is worn with a great deal of pride in accomplishment and a great sense of duty to their team, their fellow SEAL's and to the United States of America.

Most BUD/s classes start out with about 140-160 candidates, and by the time they end, they are down to roughly 20-40 men. Leaving is completely voluntary and nobody makes you go. You make that choice on your own. I can't even begin to cover what the training involves; suffice it to say that it tests your limits physically, mentally and emotionally. The instructors at BUD/s intentionally try to break the candidate's spirit because they only want men whose spirit is unbreakable.

I like to compare the young men of the church to these Navy SEALs. For one thing, if you take the number of baptized members of the church and then look at how many are serving full time missions, you have a statistical similarity between that percentage

and the percentage of Navy SEALs currently operating in the U.S. Military. More than that however is the fact that the young men of the church are very much like the Lord's Special Operations Forces in training. Forces that will soon be entering the mission field and going behind 'enemy lines', against an enemy with a much larger force, to rescue their lost brethren. The SEAL creed of 'never leaving a man behind' becomes very important as our missionaries seek out those who are in peril and attempt to bring them back to the light of the gospel.

The Young Men's program of the church is the training ground for these boys. It is the 'BUD/s' for missionaries. In addition to their homes, the Aaronic Priesthood Quorum is the place where young men are taught the principles, precepts and skills that will go with them into the mission field. This is where the MEN are separated from the BOYS and they become the elite force for the Savior in finding lost souls. If you wait until they enter the MTC for this, you have waited too long.

With that in mind, let's explore a little bit more about what it means for a young man to be a WARRIOR.

Writing about soldiers an ancient Greek philosopher named Heraclites said:

*Out of every 100 men, ten should not even be there. Eighty are just targets. Nine are real fighters, and we are lucky to have them for they make the battle. Ah, but the one, one is a **warrior** and he will bring the others back.*

The young men of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and their leaders must be WARRIORS! They cannot afford to be 'targets', or even just 'real fighters'. They must stand 'steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works'. They must train to be the ONE who can bring his brothers home. It takes courage, conviction and great faith. It also takes deliberate and constant teaching, practicing and service. It can be done with willingness and

determination . Just as a Navy SEAL must give 200% to his BUD/s training, an LDS man must give his all in the service of the Lord. It really is a matter of life or death.

Consider this from President Monsen:

“We are waging a war with sin, my brothers and sisters, but we need not despair. It is a war we can and will win. Our Father in Heaven has given us the tools we need in order to do so. He is at the helm. We have nothing to fear.” (Pres. Monson, April 2008 Gen Conf.)

Our youth need to be taught clearly and taught often that they are already at war. The situation is one that requires the very clear understanding that we all must **‘fight or die’!** The enemy is ruthless and cunning, but the Savior is even more powerful. As holders of the Priesthood it is your duty to God to use the ‘tools’ that President Monsen talked about to save your brothers and sisters from the ‘awful chain’s of hell’ that bind them down. What are those ‘tools’? Prayer, fasting, scriptures, church activities, honoring the Priesthood, charity, respect and courage all of which aid us in becoming CONVERTED to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The men of the Church today are a chosen generation. We all have been given the gift of the Priesthood. It is no accident that God has chosen us for this work. We must teach the young men of the Church to Honor the Priesthood, strengthen faith, repent of wrongs and constantly seeking to have the Spirit of the Lord a companion is our DUTY TO GOD.

So wake up! Arise from the dust, get up and stand tall, like that Marine in the television commercial. Be confident in your knowledge of the truth. Wax stronger in that knowledge. Don’t be afraid but rather be valiant for courage. Take comfort from our Heavenly Father. Pray to Him for help and guidance. Honor the Priesthood and exercise it faithfully. **ARISE AND BE MEN! FULFILL YOUR DUTY TO GOD!**

Section 7

The Essential Roles of YM Leaders

So now if the last section didn't light you on fire...this one should. The last section focused on what leaders should be teaching young men. Now I'd like to talk to the leaders directly, and address how they can better fulfill their Duty to God.

You see, I believe firmly that if we expect our young men to be the modern day equivalent of the 'sons of Helaman' then the men of the Church need to stand up and valiantly take on the role of **Helaman!** Those righteous young Ammonites would never have accomplished the miraculous feats they did without a leader like Helaman...it just would not have happened.

In the October 2008 General Conference, Elder James J. Hamula of the Quorum of the Seventy gave a talk called "Winning the War Against Evil". In his talk he addressed the young men of the church and he taught them about the 'war that **began** in heaven' that continues on the earth today. He stated:

"Now, my young friends of the Aaronic Priesthood, you are these valiant and noble sons of our Father! You are the strength of the Lord's house, HIS WARRIORS!"

I enjoyed this talk so much that I immediately downloaded it from the Church's web site. I noticed a footnote next to the word 'WARRIORS' in his talk and followed it to the following references: D&C 101:55 and D&C 105:16. Both verses say essentially the same thing in referring to the Lord's Warriors:

"...gather...the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men and they that are middle aged..."

Who are "they that are middle aged"? I believe it is you and I, the men of the Melchezideck Priesthood. Though not all are middle aged, and many are way beyond that. In referencing his

“WARRIORS” the Lord not only calls to his youth, but to their leaders as well. Then men of the Melchizedek Priesthood!

As established in chapter 6, being a warrior is so much more than just being a soldier. Warriors are more than fighters, more than leaders, more than specialists they are the truly special forces that hold themselves to a higher standard and higher ideals of peace and freedom not only for themselves but for their brothers-in-arms.

I have to confess to being a Special Operations Force nerd (I’ll bet you couldn’t tell). My interest started at an early age, and has grown over the years. In addition to the great stories they have to tell, the training of Special Forces and Special Operations Forces has been a subject that I’ve been a student of for many years. (Here is a little known fact that you can use to impress your friends: the term ‘Special Forces’ only refers to the Green Beret of the U.S. Army. All other groups like SEAL’s, RECON Marines, Rangers etc. are called ‘Special Operations Forces’) These are some incredibly tough men and it intrigues me to learn about who they are and what makes them so tough.

One common thread in among their various training schools is that the instructors are men who do it themselves. They do not ask any of their students to do anything that they have not been willing to do and master themselves. They have not only been through the training themselves but they continue to exemplify the things that they are asking new recruits to do. Often you hear the men of these special operations communities say “if you think I am tough, you should see Instructor ‘So-and-so’...”. This is especially true among the Special Forces of the Green Beret. A key and major part of their training is not only to master a subject or skill, but to then immediately turn around and teach it to their team members. Teaching is an integral part of their creed ‘De Oppresso Liber’ or to ‘free the oppressed’. Once deployed on a mission, a key to the success of a Special Forces team is to teach skills to the local fighting force that they are working with.

So how does this apply within our LDS Church context?

Well, put simply...if we are going to ask something of the Young Men of the Church, if we are holding them to the standard of 'warriorship' then we need to be the example of that which we ask.

We expect the young men to uphold a standard of spirituality, of brotherhood in the quorums and daily prayer and scripture study. We expect them to be physically, mentally and socially fit and adaptable. We expect them to serve without complaint and to attend to their Church duties with reverence and respect. With all that in mind I ask, how are we as leaders doing as the example of this? Do we do those things diligently and happily? Do we demonstrate these attributes in our attitudes, words and deeds? Do we show the joy that living the gospel standards should bring to our lives?

Do you feel bad yet? Well, it's about to get even more painful...(seriously, I do this out of love for the men of the Priesthood).

I'd like to highlight one area where I think many men in the Church fall short, and where I think that improvement would drastically alter our level of happiness.

I pointed out earlier the high physical fitness standards that the Duty to God program places on young men who want to earn this medallion. Even for the Deacon level it is pretty tough. You cannot earn this award unless you are willing to implement a rigorous program for physical fitness...you simply can't do it. Yet how many of the leaders could pass these requirements? Seriously: how many can run 1 ¼ miles, swim 50 meters using 2 different strokes, hike 6 miles in a day, complete a 20 mile bicycle ride and more? That is just the beginning. In many of the requirements, it also says that you must build a fitness plan and carry it out for at least three months to make it a habit. That is just for the Deacon level certificate. It gets harder for Teachers and Priests.

If you can pass these requirements FANTASTIC...don't ever give up. If you can't – start today building your way to better physical health. Start by turning off the TV, you'll never miss it and believe me you'll be better off for it. Then get up and MOVE! Arise

and shake off the chains with which ye are bound. Finally eat better and lay off the junk food, especially soda pop. You really have no idea how much damage that stuff is doing to your body. If you want a real WARRIOR workout go to www.stewsmith.com and download some of his free stuff.

To those who say “I can’t find the time to exercise” I say simply this: If the President of the United States of America can find time to exercise regularly, then I think you can too.

I am 100% convinced that greater spirituality flows from better health. Your personal level of fitness will drastically alter your ability to commune with the Spirit.

I issue this challenge to all men of the church, not just young men’s leaders. We all are the examples that these boys look too. If we expect them to believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the ultimate source of joy, happiness and satisfaction in this life, we need to show it by our example.

This goes for all areas of the Duty to God award. Like President Dahlquist, I’d challenge every man of the Church today to obtain a copy of the Duty to God booklets and begin to do those requirements contained therein. I guarantee that it will change your life! I know because I took up the challenge and did it myself. If you are Deacon’s Quorum advisor, do the Deacon book, Teachers quorum – the Teachers booklet etc... If you really want a challenge, do what I did and get all three books, and go through them one by one. Now you can’t cheat. You can’t look at the booklet and say “oh I did that once” and check it off, you also can’t say, “I did that in the Deacon book” and check it off for the others. It doesn’t matter if you did it once upon a time, do it again. Do everything over again. You will begin to see the value of this program and gain a testimony of the importance it plays in building men of God.

As a holder of the Priesthood, you should be doing all that stuff anyway, and that is the **key** to what this program is teaching – it is your **duty to God** to live in such a way that you are doing all this anyway.

This is especially valuable if it is your own son who is working toward this award. Get the same booklet that he is working in and do it with him. You'll have an incredible experience. He will see the importance of the habits that he is establishing and how they will carry with him throughout the rest of his life.

You may note that I issued this challenge to ALL men of the church. I meant that. Even if you are the High Priest's Group Leader, an Elders Quorum leader or a Primary Teacher...you have a duty to set the proper example to the youth of the ward and your neighborhood (of all ages). You'd be amazed at how many boys watch you and hear your words.

I am sure that the words and actions of Moroni, Antipus, Teancum, Lehi and Pahoran had a great influence on the sons of Helaman as well as those of their immediate leader. They lived what they taught and inspired it in others. They didn't put up with anybody's dissent and they stood firm for what was right.

Men need heroes and in today's world boys need men that they can look up to more than ever. If we don't fill that role, the young men of the Church will find others to look up to. The 'role models' that the world has to offer will never lead these boys to Christ. It is up to the men of the Melchizedek Priesthood to fill that role. Are you ready to do it?

Young men are not stupid and they can detect a fraud. They know if we are really doing what we say they should do. They can tell if we are just giving lip service to something or if we truly believe it. They watch us like hawks, and their eyes and ears miss nothing. They know when we are sincere and when we'd rather not be doing something. Don't give them room to doubt.

I am not going to let any man off the hook on this one, least of all the called and set apart leaders of the youth. You have been given a very holy calling. These boys are not only Heavenly Fathers warriors, but they are first and foremost his SONS. He is entrusting their guidance and training to you as youth leaders. He does not expect you to be their buddy or playmate. He expects you to lead

them, as he would if he were here. It can't be any more clear than that.

Elder M. Russell Ballard has referred to the current generation of Young Men as the "greatest generation of missionaries" in the history of the Church. To me that means that these boys have the potential to be the kinds of missionaries that we read about in scripture. Missionaries like Paul, Ammon, Nephi and Samuel the Lamanite. Those are some powerful missionaries!

So just ask yourself, if the young men around you are to be the next Ammon, what kind of leader and example to they need?

Section 8

Summary

So when all is said and done, is the Duty to God Medallion worth the six years worth of work?

No.

You may be surprised by that response, so let me explain.

If the award is your main goal and objective then that little piece of metal is totally worthless. The same can be said for the Eagle Scout rank...if all you want is the recognition then it really isn't worth much to you. The award itself can be purchased for \$10 at your nearest distribution center.

So where is the value in earning the Duty to God Medallion?

Success is in the quest...the value is in the journey. The true value and worth of the Duty to God program is in what it does to a boy as he becomes a man. You see, if followed correctly, this program outlines for a young man what it means to be a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood and to serve for the rest of his life in the Church. The Priesthood is an organization of service, sacrifice, growing responsibility, leadership and above all conversion to 'bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). Earning the Duty to God Medallion, as with any recognition, serves as a reminder of that journey and the significance it can be for the life of a boy becoming a man.

In that sense, the medallion is priceless. That is the whole message and intent of this booklet.

I firmly believe that if this program were used to it's fullest potential among the quorums of the Church that our youth would be strengthened and fortified in their efforts and their testimonies would be stronger. Fewer of them would fall away from the gospel and more would serve full time missions. Achieving all that hinges on our

ability to effectively implement all the programs that we've been given. That takes time, effort and energy. I know that there are some out there who just can't do that, and I assure you that the Lord understands. For those who can though, where much is given much is expected.

I am always open to input and would love to hear feedback from anyone out there. You can email me at petersfamily3@netzero.net I'd love to hear from you.

Lastly, I'd like to add a section to this containing some ideas of activities and resources regarding the Duty to God program that we can share with others. I intend this document to be one that will grow and transform, so any input that I can get will help a lot.

I hope that this little booklet has served to help you better understand the Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty To God program. I hope that it can be a useful weapon in your armory to combat the devices of our common enemy.

Thank you for taking the time to understand this wonderful program. May God bless your efforts as you serve these valiant youth of Zion.

Now that you know what to do; GO, arise from the dust, shake off those chains, put on the ARMOR OF GOD and lead the noble youth of the Church to victory!

Together we will win and fulfill our DUTY TO GOD.

Section 9

Activity and Lesson Ideas/Resources

SOME – Camp HELAMAN

Shields & Phalanx

www.dutytoGod.com

<http://www.lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,4645-1,00.html>

www.armorofGodCards.com

Appendix A

Old Duty to God Requirements

Requirements:

To earn the award, a young man must meet the following requirements for four full years. The years do not need to be consecutive. The fourth full year must be while the young man is a priest.

1. Show in an annual interview with the bishop that he is doing his duty to God by keeping the commandments.
2. Attend specified church meetings at least 75% of the time.
3. Participate in at least three quorum service projects each of the four years.
4. Give at least one talk in sacrament meeting each of the four years.

A young man should have completed the requirements and applied for the award before he turns nineteen.

Appendix B

How to conduct a personal interview: (a guide for fathers, or fathers-to-be)

So you are asking yourself 'how the heck do I get started doing personal interviews with my son?'. I heard this idea in a conference once and put it to work in my home. We have found that it works really well.

It is called **P.I.E. Sunday**. The Monday night before Fast Sunday, announce in family night that you are going to institute a new procedure in your family routine called "P.I.E. Sunday". P.I.E. stands for **P**ersonal **I**nterviews for **E**veryone. Then on Saturday night, go out and buy a pie. Sunday you take the time to sit down one-on-one with each member of the family (including your spouse) and you conduct a Priesthood interview with them. I like to finish up with my wife then she interviews me.

Follow this outline:

- A) Start with a prayer (you offer it, be sure to mention by name the child that you are talking too)
- B) Some questions you might ask to start out are:
 - a. How are you doing in school?
 - b. How are things with you and your friends?
 - c. How do you feel about things in our home?
- C) Then you can jump into some more difficult subjects like:
 - a. Are you saying your prayers? How is your relationship with Heavenly Father?
 - b. Are you having any problems that I can help you out with?
- D) After your short interview (try to keep it under 15 minutes) take the time to set some goals with that child. Make sure you write them down somewhere. I usually write mine in my planner. When your next interview comes up, pull these goals out and review them. Make sure to compliment the child on their efforts.
- E) Close with prayer (offered by the child).

When you have interviewed everyone then it is time to break your fast and have pie.

I have found that is a great way to make what could otherwise be an uncomfortable process something that the family looks forward too.