



# IT'S A PATRIARCHAL BLESSING!

READ, UNDERSTAND, AND LIVE  
YOUR PATRIARCHAL BLESSING WITH JOY

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# INTRODUCTION

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I AM EXCITED TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS! WHEN PEOPLE learn that I am a patriarch, I often hear things like, “There are parts of my blessing that I just don’t understand,” or “Why does my blessing talk about things that have never happened?” or “I have some questions about my patriarchal blessing; could you help me out?” Instead of feeling like a patriarchal blessing is indeed a blessing, people too often think of their patriarchal blessing with confusion or disappointment. How sad, because a patriarchal blessing should be . . . well, a blessing!

Years ago, our stake patriarch spoke with the youth in our ward about patriarchal blessings. Something he said has stayed with me for more than thirty years: “It is called a patriarchal *blessing*, and it should be a blessing in your life. It is not called ‘a patriarchal warning’ or a ‘patriarchal admonition’ or a ‘patriarchal chewing out,’ but a patriarchal *blessing!*”

That’s the first reason for another book about patriarchal blessings. The hope is that this modest contribution will help more people to think of their patriarchal blessing as a blessing. While there are already a number of books about patriarchal blessings, there are also additional reasons why I needed to write another.

The second reason for writing another book about patriarchal blessings is to help us all appreciate the path that leads to a fulness of joy, while at the same time confronting the necessary opposition. Our patriarchal blessing can help us along this journey.

If we are to think of our patriarchal blessing as a guide to assist us in life, there is a premise that helps to get us started. That premise is that God's objective for our life is to help us find eternal happiness and joy. Along the way, there are going to be challenges and opposition that are an essential part of the journey. It is almost ironic that these two concepts are most beautifully taught in the same chapter of scripture. At the end of Father Lehi's life, he left a final blessing on each of his children and grandchildren. Knowing that his son Jacob had lived his whole life with tribulations, afflictions, and rudeness from his brothers, Lehi assures Jacob that "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah cometh that he might redeem the children of men from the fall" (2 Nephi 2:25–26). This declaration was preceded by an equally profound reality: "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11).

On one hand, the very reason for our existence is to find joy. Jacob clearly understood his father's message. In fact, Jacob later tells us that the very reason the Savior would be willing to endure the cross, the very reason the plan of God was prepared from the foundation of the world, was so that our "joy would be full forever" (2 Nephi 9:18). This is not just joy; it is a full joy. And this is not just a full joy, but a full joy forever. Similarly, this calls to mind Abraham's statement on why he was seeking the blessings of the fathers: to find "greater happiness and peace and rest" (Abraham 1:2). One of the reasons why a patriarchal blessing is a blessing is because it points us in the direction to find greater joy, happiness, peace, and rest.

On the other hand, Lehi also assures us that there will be an opposition in all things. Chances are that we under-appreciate how profound Lehi's statement is. Consider carefully Lehi's declaration in 2 Nephi 9:

11. For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

12. Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

13. And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there is no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery.

And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things neither to act nor to be acted upon: wherefore all things must have vanished away.

The very existence of God implies that he understands the implications of opposition. God's omniscience denotes his ability to work with opposition. All things must be a compound in one. Christ Himself was a "man of sorrows and one acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3), but when He witnessed the faith of the Nephites He was overcome with emotion because His "joy was full" (3 Nephi 17:20-21).

In life, we are going to have to balance joy and opposition. We are going to feel love; we will enjoy the sensation of physical touch; we will thrill at the beauty of a sunset; we will relish the flavors of a home-cooked meal; we will watch our children score a winning goal. At the same time, we will also experience physical limitations; there will be disease and illness; we will all have accidents and mishaps; there will be moments of challenges and tough decisions. Those whom we love will get depressed; some of those most dear to us will reject the gospel message; others will suffer from negative relationships. All things must be a compound in one. Our patriarchal blessing becomes a blessing when its message helps us to face and conquer the effects of opposition.

A third reason for writing another book about patriarchal blessings is to assure everyone that you are hot stuff. You are a big deal. A patriarchal blessing provides evidence that the Lord God Himself knows you. He knows you personally, and He has created an earth and an earth-life experience that is custom-made for you. I don't know how else to say it; I am blown away by the magnificence of God's children and His love for all of them. Having participated in hundreds of patriarchal blessings, I come away from every one of them with a sense of awe for the recipients.

Somewhere in the Church archives there are copies of millions of individual and personalized patriarchal blessings. One by one, every individual receives his or her intimate patriarchal blessing. There is no single generic blessing for everyone, but there is a personalized blessing that is just for you. I recall an experience one time when I participated in a blessing of a sweet immigrant couple who was from a country in Central America. They were both employed in office-cleaning and home-cleaning jobs in Texas. There was nothing about

their social status that would cause one to think of them as being special in any way. In fact, in society all we hear about is how “they are not sending us their best.” However, the whole time that I had my hands on their heads, I kept feeling that I was in the presence of two of God’s elect. It was humbling, and it was beautiful. Similarly, on many occasions when a young man or young woman receives a patriarchal blessing, the parents come with the recipient. It is beautiful to witness the parents’ reactions to a blessing. For a moment, parents catch a glimpse of how God sees their son or their daughter. Instead of being a rambunctious, flaky teenager, the parents see their child in a new, inspired light.

A fourth reason to write another book about patriarchal blessings is to affirm that God needs us. He needs you and me specifically to help Him bring His children home. In the back of our minds, we sometimes hear about the scattering and gathering of Israel. We are semi-aware that we are part of the house of Israel. We have a vague understanding about a declaration of lineage and how that relates to the tribes of Israel. For most of us, however, what all this means is a bit cloudy. Another way that our patriarchal blessing truly becomes a blessing is when it helps us to appreciate that a declaration of lineage is an invitation to participate in the gathering of Israel. The promises that the Lord gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become our promises too. The charge to Abraham and his posterity to bear the ministry and the priesthood to all nations becomes our charge as well. What an incredible opportunity to participate in a work where “all the families of the earth [are] blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of eternal life” (Abraham 2:11).

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Sometimes I wish that we could rephrase that statement with a more modern-sounding tone: God loves all His children in the world so much that He was even willing to sacrifice His Only Begotten Son. And the miracle is if we believe in Him, we won’t perish, but we will have everlasting life. And just think of it: the Lord asks you and me to participate helping Him to bring His children home.

## HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

There are two different ways you can read this book because there are two types of readers: some are preparing for a patriarchal blessing they have not yet received, while others have already received a patriarchal blessing and now enter the phase of trying to figure out how to apply it to life's journey. This book contains six chapters that apply to both groups.

## *CHAPTER ONE – THE COVENANT OF ABRAHAM*

The story of Abraham and Sarah brings to us one of the most tender stories in all scripture. If we are to understand the Lord's plan of salvation for all His children, we need to appreciate the implications of the promises that are found in the covenant that the Lord made with Abraham and Sarah. Chapter 1 provides background information that will help you appreciate the covenant of Abraham, which is the covenant that the Lord makes with all of us as well.

In this chapter I briefly review the life of Abraham and Sarah, including the responsibilities that they received, but also the promised blessings that were given to them—and, by extension, the blessings that are promised to us. For those who have not yet received a patriarchal blessing, this chapter helps to bring a focus on God's promises and invitations to His children. For those who have already received a blessing, this chapter helps confirm one of the major topics that unfortunately is sometimes skipped over and minimized.

## *CHAPTER TWO – THE DECLARATION OF LINEAGE*

One of the most significant parts of your patriarchal blessing is the declaration of lineage, which identifies the tribe through which we will receive the blessings that were promised to Abraham and Sarah and their posterity. In this chapter, I review a brief overview of what is meant by the term *twelve tribes of Israel*, their origin, and the blessings that were pronounced on each of the sons of Jacob and their descendants.

In this chapter, I also review the important role and implications of birthrights. As you read this chapter, keep in mind that everyone contributes to the gathering of Israel, and members of each tribe contribute in specific or unique ways. Think of the declaration of your tribe as an affirmation of your

role in helping the Lord take the gospel to all nations. The object of this chapter is to provide specific information about each of the twelve tribes.

### *CHAPTER THREE – STATEMENTS ABOUT LIFE POSSIBILITIES*

Another major part of your patriarchal blessing is to receive statements about your “life possibilities.” In this chapter, I review how your blessing becomes a guide for your life. President Thomas S. Monson gave a conference address in 1983 that focused on how a patriarchal blessing becomes a personal Liahona to guide us in our life, and this is the object of this chapter. Statements about your life possibilities focus on six key areas: accomplishments, challenges, blessings, promises, admonitions, and warnings.

In this chapter, I also review how your blessing becomes a guide for your life when you combine your efforts with faith.

Another focus of this chapter is to address gifts of the Spirit, which are often highlighted in your patriarchal blessing. It is also in this chapter that I address how your patriarchal blessing prepares you to meet life’s challenges and moments of decision.

### *CHAPTER FOUR – SUGGESTIONS RELATED TO GETTING READY FOR A PATRIARCHAL BLESSING*

You can enrich the experience of receiving a patriarchal blessing by preparing with information that helps you understand what the purpose of the blessing is. This chapter provides recommendations that include scriptures and scriptural references that everyone should read before receiving their blessing. The recommendations also include talks from general conference and other devotionals, and they include recommendations from other published sources, books, and pamphlets. For those who have already received a patriarchal blessing, this chapter can be used to help others in their preparation.

### *CHAPTER FIVE – SUGGESTIONS ON WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR BLESSING AFTER YOU RECEIVE IT*

This chapter offers suggestions to help you benefit the most from your blessing after you receive it. After receiving the printed copy of your blessing, there are many things you can do to expand on the topics, better understand the promises and declarations, and best receive guidance and spiritual insights. This chapter also has a section that addresses what to do when statements in your blessing seem difficult to understand or less likely to be realized.

## *CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL OBSERVATIONS*

In this chapter, I share some final insights about patriarchal blessings, things that I have observed over the years while participating in hundreds of blessings. I hope this chapter sheds light on the experience from the perspective of a patriarch. These topics include observations about what it is like to try to put inspired thoughts and impressions into words, what it is like to type out a transcription of the recorded blessings, and what it is like to prepare for a blessing.

### FOLLOW-UP AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

Every chapter ends with a summary table and then some suggestions for follow-up and follow-through. You are invited to apply the concepts by putting them into practice. You will also notice final notes and references that provide links to other sources, books, online materials, and Church-related topics. Given that in many parts of this book I share experiences that I have had as a patriarch, I tried to write in a more personal style, while at the same time respect the personal and private nature of sacred patriarchal blessings.

The Church's website, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org), offers amazing resources, and there are other excellent books and resources that can help you understand Abraham, the covenant the Lord made with Abraham and Sarah, the twelve tribes of Israel, the gathering of Israel, and how all these become significant so that your patriarchal blessing will indeed become a blessing in your life.

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