Excerpts from “Power of the Word,” Ezra Taft Benson, Ensign, May 1986, pg 80-81

My dear brethren, this is an answer to the great challenge of our time. The word of God, as found in the scriptures, in the words of living prophets, and in personal revelation, has the power to fortify the Saints and arm them with the Spirit so they can resist evil, hold fast to the good, and find joy in this life.

Now to you priesthood leaders we say, look to the prophetic counsel of Lehi and Paul (1 Ne 8:28, 32; 12:17; 15:23-24; 1 Tim 3:1-7, 13-15) and others like them. In that counsel you will find the solution to the challenges you face in keeping your flocks safe from the “ravening wolves” that surround them. (See Mi 7:15; Acts 20:29.) We know that you too have great anxiety for the members of your wards and stakes and expend great time and effort in their behalf.

There is much that we ask of you who have been chosen for leadership. We place many loads upon your shoulders. You are asked to run the programs of the Church, interview and counsel with the members, see that the financial affairs of the stakes and wards are properly handled, manage welfare projects, build buildings, and engage in a host of other time-consuming activities.

While none of those activities can be ignored and laid aside, they are not the most important thing you can do for those you serve. In recent years, time and time again we have counseled you that certain activities bring greater spiritual returns than others. As early as 1970, President Harold B. Lee told the regional representatives:

“We are convinced that our members are hungry for the gospel, undiluted, with its abundant truths and insights.... There are those who have seemed to forget that the most powerful weapons the Lord has given us against all that is evil are His own declarations, the plain simple doctrines of salvation as found in the scriptures.” (In regional representatives’ seminar, 1 Oct 1970, p. 6.)

In a First Presidency message in 1976, President Kimball said:

“I am convinced that each of us, at least some time in our lives, must discover the scriptures for ourselves -- and not just discover them once, but rediscover them again and again.... The Lord is not trifling with us when He gives us these things, for ‘unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.’ (Lk 12:48.) Access to these things means responsibility for them. We must study the scriptures according to the Lord’s commandment (see 3 Ne 23:1-5); and we must let them govern our lives.” (Ensign, September 1976, pp. 4-5.)

In April 1982, Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke to the regional representatives about the priority the scriptures should take in our labors. He said: “We are so wound up in our programs and statistics and trends, in properties, lands and mammon, and in achieving goals that will highlight the excellence of our work, that we have omitted the weightier matters of the law. ... However talented men may be in administrative matters; however eloquent they may be in expressing their views; however learned they may be in the worldly things -- they will be denied the sweet whisperings of the Spirit that might have been theirs unless they pay the price of studying, pondering, and praying about the scriptures.” (In regional representatives’ seminar, 2 April 1982, pp. 1-2.)

That same day, Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke to the stake presidents and regional representatives. He said: “Buildings and budgets, and reports and programs and procedures are very important. But, by themselves, they do not carry that essential spiritual nourishment and will not accomplish what the Lord has given us to do.... The right things, those with true spiritual nourishment, are centered in the scriptures.” (In meeting with stake presidents and regional representatives, 2 April 1982, pp. 1-2.)

I add my voice to these wise and inspired brethren and say to you that one of the most important things you can do as a priesthood leader is to Immerse yourselves in the scriptures. Search them diligently. Feast upon the words of Christ. Learn the doctrine. Master the principles that are found therein. There are few other efforts that will bring greater dividends to your calling. There are few other ways to gain greater inspiration as you serve.

But that alone, as valuable as it is, is not enough. You must also bend your efforts and your activities to stimulating meaningful scripture study among the members of the Church. Often we spend great effort in trying to increase the activity levels in our stakes. We work diligently to raise the percentages of those attending sacrament meetings. We labor to get a higher percentage of our young men on missions. We strive to improve the numbers of those marrying in the temple. All of these are commendable efforts and important to the growth of the kingdom. But when individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, these other areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow.... You must help the Saints see that studying and searching the scriptures is not a burden laid upon them by the Lord, but a marvelous blessing and opportunity....

Today the world is full of alluring and attractive ideas that can lead even the best of our members into error and deception. Students at universities are sometimes so filled with the doctrines of the world they begin to question the doctrines of the gospel. How do you as a priesthood leader help fortify your membership against such deceptive teachings? The Savior gave the answer in His great discourse on the Mount of Olives when He promised, “And who treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived.” (JS-M 1:37) ...

Success in righteousness, the power to avoid deception and resist temptation, guidance in our daily lives, healing of the soul -- these are but a few of the promises the Lord has given to those who will come to His word. Does the Lord promise and not fulfill? Surely if He tells us that these things will come to us if we lay hold upon His word, then the blessings can be ours. And if we do not, then the blessings may be lost. However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are to be found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the word of the Lord and holding fast to it as we make our way through the mists of darkness to the tree of life.

And if we ignore what the Lord has given us, we may lose the very power and blessings which we seek. In a solemn warning to the early Saints, the Lord said this of the Book of Mormon: [Quotes D&C 84:54-57, which explains the condemnation the Church is under.]