Follow the Prophet

By Robert Heyn, Young Men general board member

“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

Throughout history God has always wanted to make known His will to us, His children. Since the foundation of the world, the way the Lord has used to communicate with His children and Church is through revelation and communication to His holy prophets.

A prophet is a person who can communicate with God. Heavenly Father has used various channels of communication to speak to His prophets. With some prophets He communicates through dreams, with others, He has done it through thoughts. Other prophets have heard His voice. Others walked with Him and talked with Him face to face. The purpose of these communications, as taught by the prophet Amos, is to communicate His will, teachings, and all things He considers important for His children.

Although each person is entitled to receive personal revelation, our Father keeps an order for His children and His Church. He reveals His will through those who have been called and anointed by Him. Through prophets, God gives clear answers and guidance to the problems and challenges we experience in our world today. What the prophets teach us today has to do with our problems and challenges of today. The teachings and guidance of prophets today are more important to us than the teachings of prophets centuries ago. However, all teachings of past prophets are true and most of them still apply to us in our day.

When we are baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ, we enter into a covenant with the Lord. Part of this agreement is that we will sustain and follow the prophets. By sustaining and following the prophets, we recognize they have been called by God and are God’s representatives on earth. Our baptismal covenant includes that we will pray for the prophets and strive to follow their teachings and commandments.

On the other side of the baptismal covenant, Heavenly Father promises that He will always guide us through His prophets. God will never allow any prophet to lead His church or His people in the wrong path. In addition to the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Heavenly Father calls fourteen men to be prophets, seers, and revelators. These men are the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. By calling these men, Heavenly Father ensures that all decisions in His Church are made in common agreement by those He has called. Thus God makes sure that nobody can lead the Church astray.

Sometimes we do not understand the great privilege and blessing it is to have living prophets. The reality is that the heavens are open and we, the children of the Eternal Father, can know His will. Sometimes the will of God will not be the most popular. Often, it goes against the teachings and practices of the world. However, we can always be sure that the will and teachings of God, revealed to His prophets, will bring true happiness, peace, and harmony to our lives.

Since ancient times with Adam, Moses, Abraham, Israel, Lehi, and Mormon; to modern times with the Prophet Joseph Smith; until today with our beloved prophet President Thomas S. Monson, God has maintained the pattern. He has always communicated with us, His children, through prophets. The same is true today. What a delight it is for me to know that this is true, which undoubtedly makes me always striving to do my best to follow the prophets of God.
Scout Leaders give a Great Gift!

By Primary general presidency

One of the greatest gifts and blessings given to us from our Heavenly Father is the opportunity of working with His children. We truly know of their great worth and their potential to do hard and wonderful things. Scouting is a tool that has been given to us to use as we teach His children. It helps us give children experiences that teach them how to apply the gospel principles they are learning in their daily lives. Scouting helps them as they build a strong foundation of faith and testimony in Christ. We thank you, all who work in Scouting, for your dedication to boys through your love and service.

We know that Scouting contributes to a boy’s preparation to hold the priesthood of God. Scout leaders have a sacred responsibility and part in this preparation. Each of you plays a vital role as you help these boys have a vision of what they can become as they learn their duty as priesthood holders—as they prepare to make temple covenants and become missionaries, husbands, and fathers. Through your selfless service, boys can become better able to serve the family, the community, and God.

President Thomas S. Monson said, "Impossible to measure is the great good which has come from this organization during the past century...I believe in the power of Scouting to bless and enrich lives for good" ("President Monson Discusses Strengths of Scouting," video on LDS.org, Apostles and Prophets, video series, 2010).

Truly, Scout leaders give a great gift!

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Scouting Handbook Featured Sections

2.0 Training and Development

Young Men and Primary leaders who are called to Scouting responsibilities should receive training in Scouting principles, policies, and procedures as used by the Church. Trained Scout leaders who understand and live the gospel, understand priesthood governance, and understand the Scouting program are better able to serve young men and boys involved in Scouting activities. Accordingly, adult leaders are considered trained when they complete the following training:

- Youth Protection Training (available online, to be completed before service with youth begins and repeated every two years).
- Leader position-specific training for Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity, and Venturing leaders, or Troop Committee Challenge for troop committee members.
- Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills for Boy Scout, Varsity, and Venturing leaders (offered by BSA local districts and councils).

6.2 Scouting for 11-Year-Olds—Paragraphs 3—5

Eleven-year-old boys meet separately from the Aaronic Priesthood–age Scouts because they are not yet part of a quorum. They preferably meet in the daytime, but if evening meetings are necessary, the boys should not be away from their homes late at night and must be carefully supervised until they return home.

Eleven-year-old Scouts participate in rank advancement. They are encouraged to complete as many of the First Class rank requirements as possible before turning 12, with the exception of the requirement for six overnight camps.

Eleven-year-old Scouts may participate in three one-night camps a year, which meets the camping requirements for advancement to the rank of Second Class. If desired, these overnight camps may be held with the ward’s Boy Scout troop. The eleven-year-old Scout leader plans the camps in consultation with the ward Primary presidency, the bishopric adviser to the Primary, and the ward Scouting committee. No other Scout-sponsored overnight camping should be planned for eleven-year-old Scouts.

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Scouting Leaders Should Conscientiously Follow the Prophet

By Mac McIntire, LDS-BSA Relationships Scout Blog

Although I did not attend Primary in my youth, I love to hear the Primary-age children sing the song “Follow the Prophet.” There is something about the rhythmic cadence that drives the message home in the chorus: “Follow the prophet; don’t go astray. Follow the prophet; he knows the way” (Children’s Songbook, 110).

By the time a young man becomes of Scouting-age he should have heard and sung that message many times if he has grown up in the Church. What a simple and important message it is. “Follow the prophet!” should be the rallying cry of every member of The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints. It ought to be a refrain we preach and teach to our young men repeatedly. Following the prophet and holding to the iron rod of the scriptures are the two surest ways for our youth to protect themselves from the ever-increasing challenges of the world.

In Scouting there are a lot rules that are designed to keep boys safe and teach them properly. Youth Protection standards are established to keep child predators away from our youth. The Guide to Safe Scouting and the Safety in Church Activities instructions prevent serious injury during Scout outings. The Firem’n Chit and Totin’ Chip certifications teach boys to be responsible when around fire and knives. The Leave No Trace principles instill respect for the environment and educate young men regarding their responsibilities in nature. The Scout Oath is a solemn promise and the twelve points of the Scout Law are well-defined values that will help a young man succeed throughout his life.

As Scouting and Aaronic Priesthood leaders we have a sacred responsibility to guide and nurture the Lord’s young men along the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life. In doing so, we hope these young men will follow our counsel and abide by our instructions. We have been called to set the example and lead the way.

When one is in a leadership position it is impossible not to be a model—a model for good or a model for bad. It is impossible to not teach youth by our actions. We cannot not communicate by our behaviors or attitude. We cannot not set an example for young men. Consciously or unconsciously Scouts will discern who we are, what we believe, and how we live.

If we want our young men to follow the prophet, we must be a model of what that means. If we want our youth to abide by the precepts outlined by the prophets in the For the Strength of Youth booklet, we must live those principles faithfully. If we want our boys to become men of honor and character, we must be honorable and true to our values. If we want Scouts to keep the promises they make in the Scout Oath—and the oath and covenant of the priesthood—we must be promise-keepers and abide by the oaths we make.

As a management consultant I teach business leaders the importance of staying conscious. Leaders must be forever vigilant and conscientious regarding what they do and how they act because it affects those over whom they have stewardship. As Scouting leaders we must constantly be cognizant of the messages we send. The question of “What am I teaching my young men by my actions?” should be at the forefront of our minds.

For example, what are you teaching your young men if you fail to follow the prophet’s counsel? What are you teaching your young men if you ignore the commandments of the Lord? What are you teaching your young men if you refuse to be trained in your Scouting responsibilities? What are you teaching your young men if you ignore the safety guidelines of the BSA or the Church? What are you teaching your young men if you litter your campsite and leave it messy when you pack up? What are you teaching your young men if you fail to keep the promises in the Scout Oath or don’t model the values of the Scout Law?

The Lord has given us prophets to guide us in our lives. He has established prophet-approved programs (such as Scouting) to offer instruction, counsel, advice, and experiences that instill the qualities and characteristics He hopes His children will emulate. It is up to us as Young Men and Scouting leaders to connect the doctrine, principles, and precepts espoused in these programs for our youth. It is also up to us to apply them in our lives so we can set the proper example for the young men in the Church.

To the Lord’s young men, and to ourselves, we say:

"Keep the commandments; keep the commandments!"

_In this there is safety; in this there is peace._

He will send blessings; He will send blessings.

_Words of a prophet: Keep the commandments._

_In this there is safety and peace_” (“Keep the Commandments,” Hymns, 303).
Varsity—“Follow the Prophet”

By Andy Gibbons, LDS-BSA Relationships Varsity Task Force

The phrase "follow the prophet" sometimes calls up in my mind the image of Pinocchio, the wooden boy who was being enticed by two paths. One path was the path of restraint and obedience; the other path was the easy, wide road that seemed to lead to immediate enjoyments for the least effort.

In contrast, when we celebrate the great achievements of the prophets and pioneers who have gone before us to build the peace and strength of the kingdom, we relate stories of hardship, of challenge, and of obedience—anything but the easy road.

It has been true in all ages of time that the words of the prophets have pointed to a path that is the least easy one. This can be attributed to the fact that taking the easy path can weaken the individual, while accepting challenge invariably strengthens.

The Varsity Scout program represents a challenge. Originally designed by the Church to meet the needs of 14- and 15-year-old boys and to give experience to young teachers quorum presidencies, it seems to go against the grain of easiness in so many ways. It is just one more program to implement. It will require more leadership positions, more scheduling, more resources, more training, more supervision, and more work all around. Moreover, the Varsity Scout program is activity intensive and can, in the hands of an untrained leader, lead to dangerous situations.

Were it not so successful in helping young boys transition into young manhood, the program might have been abandoned years ago by the Church, but that has not happened, despite the often lukewarm support, lack of leadership vision, lack of leadership training, and only token support from National.

Now, in an even more challenging atmosphere, all of the Scouting programs of the Church are being re-evaluated in the minds of LDS Scouters and local leaders, many of whom find Scouting in general to be too much of a challenge.

I am reminded of an account from my great-great-grandfather, who was called to serve missions by Brigham Young in the Iron Mission, in the Indian Mission (working under Jacob Hamblin), and later as a mission president when the mission was split. We sometimes picture the level of faith in terms of everyone who was called to such a mission responding positively and going obediently to their missions, despite the hardships of hot summers and few comforts. However, my grandfather's account shows that there were those few who would come to the heat of the desert in the summer, camp for a few weeks, resist accepting any assignments, and then disappear quietly for the more fertile Salt River and Gila Valleys of Arizona.

Among LDS Scouters today, unfortunately, there are those who will follow the prophet's call to serve the boys half-heartedly for a few weeks and then find excuses to turn up missing, hoping to find greener pastures in another calling.

Following the prophet requires accepting calls with the whole heart. It requires an attitude of magnifying a call, not just accepting it. It requires taking initiative, and not always waiting for exact directions. It requires being creative, and loving those you serve, even the unlovable ones.

Following the prophet is inconvenient, because it takes time, preparation, personal meditation, prayer, and commitment. Following the prophet requires judgment. In the case of Varsity Scouting it requires confronting fears, overcoming communication barriers, learning new skills, and providing challenge and opportunity in a safe way. It requires constantly looking for new resources, ideas, and training to keep the program lively.

Most of all, it requires the ability to hand over to a youth a challenging task and then providing support that gives the youth confidence to achieve the task. That requires vision about how youth, as well as adults, grow from accepting hard things and doing them.

Following the prophet can be hard, but the pay is always equal to the task, and those who accept the difficult task of implementing Varsity Scouting principles, even against opposition, will find great satisfaction for themselves, and kingdom-building growth in those they have served.
Safety Moment—Weather Safety

By Alan A. Rogers, Sr. Safety Manager – Loss Prevention, LDS Risk Management Division

It may seem a little out of place to be reading an article about Weather Safety in February. However, one of the greatest appeals of Scouting is that outdoor activities are encouraged—and even promoted—all year long! So the main questions we should ask ourselves are: “How do we appropriately prepare for any type of weather?” and “Where can I find the weather safety training I need?” If you pose these questions to a seasoned outdoorsman, the answer will likely be “It all depends on where and when you are going!”

How you prepare for an outdoor or overnight activity during winter in Minnesota is different from a hiking, biking, or camping trip in southern Arizona during winter.

Let’s start with some basic principles that will help us plan and prepare for any outdoor adventure. Here are four basic principles used by BSA’s Northern Tier High Adventure Base to help you prepare for your outing:

1. Proper Training
2. Planning (and Willingness to Adapt)
3. Prevention
4. Identifying Responsibilities

The first principle on our list is “Proper Training.” It’s a good idea to always start with the basics, courses like the BSA’s Youth Protection and Weather Hazards training. BSA requires all leaders to be trained in Youth Protection and at least one leader going on an outdoor or overnight activity to have completed the online Weather Hazards training.

After the basics, then you can move to the specific training for the type of activity you will be holding and the location where you are holding it. Begin by finding out what the weather patterns and expected temperature ranges are for the area where your outing is taking place. If you and your Scouts have the right knowledge and training, it can make all the difference in the outcome of the outing. Some links for great resources in this area are listed below:

- Severe Weather Safety Tips – from NOAA and the National Weather Service
- General Awareness and Preparedness information on floods, landslides, thunderstorms, tornados, tsunamis, volcanoes, wildfires, and winter storms (American Red Cross)
- Emergency Preparedness and Response - the CDC’s website with resources about disasters and weather emergencies (including winter weather)
- Cold Weather Leader Training course - from BSA’s Northern Tier High Adventure Base (includes course presentations, videos, links, and other valuable information).
- Hot Weather Safety Tips – from the CDC

The second principle is “Planning and Willingness to Adapt.” Always be willing to adjust your plans as conditions change. It can be disheartening when a lot of time and effort has gone into planning an outing and then the weather is less than perfect. However, this is also the time when a lot of learning occurs for individual Scouts. I still remember my first winter campout as a Scout. Even though the conditions weren’t life threatening, the main lesson I learned was to never be unprepared for a winter campout! My Scoutmaster and his assistant made sure that my tent partner and I wouldn’t be permanently injured (although I thought we would freeze to death!), but they didn’t remove all of the consequences from my not listening or paying attention during our troop planning meeting before the campout. A lot of shivering that night has given me a lifetime of learning, understanding, and preparedness.

Your weather plan should start out with identifying what types of weather hazards you may be exposed to while on your outing and then asking the following questions:

1. Have we identified all of the potential conditions like rain, snow, heat, wind, lightning, etc.?
2. What actions do we need to take for each identified condition?
3. What are the warning signs connected to the condition?
4. Does our troop, team, or crew’s gear and clothing match up with the potential hazards?
5. Who has the assignment to check the weather conditions and forecast just before the outing?
6. Do we need to adjust the plans before we go, based on our findings?

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An effective weather plan helps to guide the decision-making process. While some weather risk factors (like hot temperatures) can pose serious hazards like heat stress or heat exhaustion, other weather-related risk factors such as rain or snow can pose even more serious hazards like frostbite or hypothermia. There may be no margin for error when temperatures are too hot or below freezing, during a lightning storm, or if flash floods occur.

The third principle is “Prevention.” One of the best ways to prevent injury is by paying close attention to the first two principles—training and planning. When you camp in a higher location because heavy rains are possible, you are preventing the serious injuries that can come from a flash flood. When you seek shelter early when lightning threatens, you are practicing prevention. When you monitor hydration and hike during the cooler hours, you are definitely preventing potential problems. Prevention is putting into practice the things that you learn and then acting on the plans that have been made. On the safety.lds.org website, there is a great eight-minute video that highlights what can happen when you plan well and then follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost as they come. It is titled “Safety Through Planning and Relying on the Spirit.” For activities or events in a fixed location, another great resource can found in the Church’s Severe Weather Planning fact sheet, also available on the safety.lds.org website.

The fourth principle is “Identifying Responsibilities.” We may be familiar with the counsel found in Doctrine and Covenants 107:99, where it states: “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.” The fourth principle is rooted deeply within this scripture. Everyone on an outing or overnight camp should know and understand what their role is, what specific assignments they have, and then be willing to carry them out. All Scouts need to be aware of hazards and have the training on what to do in emergencies. For the leaders, there is not only having the responsibility of supervision, but also knowing how to handle any weather hazards that may come up and being willing to act accordingly. I have been on several group outings where weather conditions have required us to make an adjustment in our plans. No leader ever wants to cancel an outing—and cancelling should always be a last resort—but sometimes it is the only appropriate course of action.

In April 2010 President Thomas S. Monson gave a talk titled “Preparation Brings Blessings.” There are many blessings that come into the lives of Scouts and their leaders through Scouting activities. Careful preparation for these activities brings blessings of safety and protection as well. As we teach the Scouts new skills and provide opportunities for growth, let us also teach them the blessings that come from thoughtful preparation. By preparing for weather conditions and demonstrating flexibility as conditions change, we are also preparing the Scouts for other important aspects of life.

Growing Scouting—Boundary Waters High Adventure

By Mike Bronson, Ogden, UT

While serving with the Young Men in the ward in Iowa City, Iowa, we felt it would be of great benefit to have them participate in a high adventure. Our bishop, Bishop Jones, wondered if I felt it would be possible to organize a high adventure experience to the Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota. When he approached me and asked, “Do you think we can do it?” my response was “Absolutely!” I had previously guided many groups through the backcountry of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks while working at Camp Loll, a Scout camp nestled between the two parks.

We began to set a plan in motion and I soon realized we had embarked on a monumental task. We did not have the necessary gear; we had no one in our ward who was familiar with the Boundary Waters; and none of the boys had ever even been in a canoe! Our lack of experience and preparedness was not viewed as a road block to our journey, but only a challenge to overcome.

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Over the next year we slowly acquired the needed backpacking stoves, water filter pumps, and other needed equipment as the boys began to obtain their personal gear. We collected maps and guidebooks of the area. Through the Internet, we became familiar with the Boundary Waters, routes, canoe rental locations, and necessary permits. We went through all the necessary training offered by the BSA local council.

The real challenge was providing the boys with experience in canoes. We had to get a little creative with this needed exposure. A local sporting goods company was offering a “Paddle Day” at a local reservoir to try out their different canoes. We gathered up all the boys and took turns taking them out in the canoes as an introductory experience. We also found a local canoe rental outfitter that offered day trips ten miles down the Maquoketa River. These activities were mandatory for all those wanting to go on the high adventure. We had several campouts where we simulated “no trace camping” and tried to duplicate the experience we would encounter in the Boundary Waters. We packed our gear, ate dehydrated meals, pumped to filter our water, and hung our food and smellable items in “bear bags” for the evening.

Excitement was in the air as the July 2 departure date approached. We had acquired the necessary equipment, had become familiar with our proposed route, and had mastered the basics of canoeing and “no trace camping.” The boys were prepared to succeed. We canoed almost fifty miles over six days on the Boundary Waters and we caught more northern pike fish than we could eat. We all had an incredible experience and gained a new-found love for northern Minnesota. Perhaps the most important lesson we learned, however, was that anything is possible with planning, proper preparation, hard work, and dedication.

I should probably mention that, at the time of this adventure, I was in my last year of dental school.

I actually had to request to have the last couple of days of my third year off. When I approached the head of the endodontic rotation to get permission, I still remember his response. “You’re a Scoutmaster? I LOVE Scouts!”

The next year I finished school and returned to Utah. The following spring I received a phone call from Bishop Jones and an invitation to return with them for a planned trip to the Boundary Waters. Not only had they realized that they could accomplish anything they desired, they were now empowered to do it on their own!