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## The Effective Elders Quorum

By **Elder** Dale E. Miller Of the Seventy



*The fourth in a series of articles about priesthood **quorums** and their purposes.*

Dale E. Miller, "The Effective **Elders Quorum**," *Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 30

Modern scripture suggests that priesthood holders are to "bring again Zion" as prophesied by Isaiah (**D&C 113:8**; see **Isa. 52:1, 8**). Modern scripture also indicates that **elders** are to be "standing ministers" (**D&C 124:137**). This means that stake presidents and bishops count on strong **elders quorums** in carrying out the mission of the Church—to invite all to come unto Christ and be perfected in Him—through proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead.

The challenges in building a strong **quorum** are great. The **quorum** is in a state of constant change. Likely there are insufficient active members to cover home teaching assignments. Adult male converts often move away or can't be located. Prospective **elders** often outnumber the active **elders**. Faithful **elders** often travel or move for employment or educational reasons. Some are called as high priests or receive major assignments outside the **quorum**. So the question is, how does an **elders quorum** that is in constant flux grow in strength?

President Stephen L Richards (1879–1959), First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: "A **quorum** is three things: first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit. Within it the men of the Priesthood learn of the principles of the Gospel, establish true brotherhood, and carry forward the work of Christ. It is a God-given association from which they derive more of lasting advantage than from any other fraternal organization in our society. Its prime purpose is to encourage and safeguard the individual." 1

By President Richards's definition, the way to build a strong **quorum** is to:

1. Strengthen the bond of brotherhood among *all* **quorum** members.
2. Learn fundamental doctrines and priesthood duties.

3. Fulfill service assignments involving the entire **quorum**.

Following are a few practical suggestions on how to accomplish these **quorum**-building activities:

### **1. Strengthen the Bond of Brotherhood among All Quorum Members**

**Include all assigned members in the quorum.** None should be excluded, whatever the circumstance. President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the **Quorum** of the Twelve Apostles, has said: “He [the **quorum** member] may lose interest in the **quorum**, but the **quorum** must never lose interest in him. The **quorum** is responsible always and continually for each of its members. To ignore an inactive member, to withdraw interest in and contact with him is [to do away with] his rights as a holder of the priesthood.” <sup>2</sup>

**Visit. Visit. Visit.** **Elders quorum** presidencies around the world say their personal visits have lasting impact in bringing all members into the brotherhood of the **quorum**. These visits are best received when they are seen as acts of true friendship and genuine interest. Often an invitation is extended to participate actively in the **quorum** and a blessing is left in the home through kneeling in prayer.

**Assign work to each member.** President Gordon B. Hinckley emphasized, “Each **quorum** must be a working brotherhood for every member if its purpose is to be realized.” <sup>3</sup> This certainly fits with his admonition that every new convert (and **quorum** member) needs a responsibility. Each member needs the continual spiritual nourishment that comes from a feeling of serving someone in need.

### **2. Learn Fundamental Doctrines and Priesthood Duties**

**Learn from those who lead.** An **elders quorum** president should teach the **quorum** members what he learns. Throughout the week, teachings of the Spirit may come to his mind and his heart. He should make note of them. In company with the stake presidency, the bishopric, the assigned high councilor, or in leadership meetings, he could ask himself, “What am I learning here that should be taught to my brothers in the **quorum**?” If he will keep and edit his notes, opportunities will arise to share them in **quorum** meetings, interviews, or special counseling moments.

The scriptures assign the **elders quorum** president “to sit in council with them [**quorum** members], and to teach them according to the covenants” (**D&C 107:89**; see also **D&C 20:38–45**). Sitting in council can take place privately during home visits or periodic interviews, or it can take place as a group with the entire **quorum**.

**Learn from those who teach.** **Quorum** member interest and attendance are partly a function of effective teaching and learning. While many will come out of respect for their covenants, others will decide to participate based on perceived value in the lessons taught. Teachers should prepare and give lessons with the members’ needs and involvement in mind. Teachers should also teach with spiritual authority and guidance as

explained in Doctrine and Covenants section 50 (see **D&C 50:10–25**). “Wherefore, he that preacheth [by the Spirit] and he that receiveth [by the Spirit], understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (**D&C 50:22**).

### **3. Fulfill Service Assignments Involving the Entire Quorum**

***Build temporal self-reliance among quorum members.*** President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961), First Counselor in the First Presidency, counseled that in dealing with the problems of needy individuals, the bishop’s responsibility is a temporary one and involves “caring for them until they can help themselves”; the priesthood **quorum**’s responsibility, however, continues “until not only [their] temporal needs are met, but [their] spiritual ones also. As a concrete example—a bishop extends help while the artisan or craftsman is out of work and in want; a priesthood **quorum** sets him up in work and tries to see that he goes along until fully self-supporting and active in his priesthood duties.” <sup>4</sup>

***Build a viable home teaching system.*** **Elder** L. Tom Perry of the **Quorum** of the Twelve Apostles gave valuable counsel in the January 11, 2003, worldwide leadership training meeting. He spoke of small units in the Church. The counsel also fits when a home teaching base is small. Active home teachers should be assigned according to need, focusing first on new converts. Total coverage may not be achieved for some time. **Elder** Perry’s counsel was: “If, as priesthood **leaders**, you only help your members keep their covenants with the Lord, you have done measurably what you are expected to do.” <sup>5</sup>

Perhaps President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) defined the essence of home teaching best when he stated: “The spirit of the times is worldliness. . . . But the Lord has offered an old program in new dress, and it gives promise to return the world to sane living, to true family life, to family interdependence. It is to return the father to his rightful place at the head of the family, to bring mother home from social life and employment, the children from near-total fun and frolic. The Home Teaching Program with its crowning activity, the Family Home Evening, will neutralize the ill effects if people will only apply the remedy.” <sup>6</sup>

These are only a few suggestions to help **elders** build a strong **quorum**. We are greatly blessed to have continuing counsel from living apostles and prophets. President Boyd K. Packer has spoken of answers that come from the Church handbooks, the scriptures, past counsel from living prophets, and keys and rights to continuous, personal revelation. <sup>7</sup> We magnify our callings and also our own personal spiritual development as we continue to learn and apply the teachings of living prophets and of our local **leaders**.

**Elders quorums** are to be commended for the great work they do to “bring again Zion,” thus fulfilling prophecy in preparing the Saints to come unto Christ and their God. May God richly bless them in their efforts.

### **On Priesthood Quorums**

“It will be a marvelous day, my brethren ... when our priesthood **quorums** become an anchor of strength to every man belonging thereto, when each such man may appropriately be able to say, ‘I am a member of a priesthood **quorum** of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I stand ready to assist my brethren in all of their needs, as I am confident they stand ready to assist me in mine. Working together, we shall grow spiritually as covenant sons of God. Working together, we can stand, without embarrassment and without fear, against every wind of adversity that might blow, be it economic, social, or spiritual.’ ”

**President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Welfare Responsibilities of the Priesthood Quorums,”** *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 86.

### **Gratitude for an Elders Quorum**

My father was brought into the Church when he was courting my mother. He was ordained an **elder** and was active for a short period before he fell away from the Church.

He had no formal contact with the Church for about 50 years. He had moved many times. And then, when he was 82, living alone in southern California and failing in health, two men knocked on his door on a Sunday morning. They said, “We’re here to take you to priesthood meeting.”

He was so grateful that somebody would take the effort to befriend him. Those men took my father to church—something his three active sons never could accomplish, except on special occasions. They were good examples of how priesthood **quorum** members should seek out those in need. My family will be forever grateful to the men of that **quorum**.  
—**Elder Dale E. Miller of the Seventy**

*Gospel topics: activation, brotherhood, home teaching, leadership, priesthood, service*