



# USING STORIES TO TEACH ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD

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*How can you  
turn a simple  
story into a  
powerful  
teaching  
tool?*

By Heidi McConkie

Imagine this scenario: You join a group of friends who are eagerly digging into lunch and are engrossed in conversation. As you swirl a mouthful of spaghetti onto a plastic fork, your buddy Anton turns to you and asks, “So what makes Mormonism different from other Christian religions?”

As you pause to ponder his question, you feel prompted to share your knowledge of the priesthood. But you’re a little worried because you’re pretty sure that Anton has never heard anything about the priesthood before. You want to help him understand what it means for men to hold God’s power and show him how they use it to serve and bless others. But how do you do it? Well, you might share a story.

### WHY USE STORIES

Stories are a powerful way to teach. That’s one of the reasons the Savior shared parables—simple stories that the people He taught could relate to.

One of the benefits of teaching with stories is that it allows people to learn as much as they are spiritually ready to understand. For example, when Anton asks you about what makes the Church unique, if he is just curious, then your story will help him have a basic knowledge of what the priesthood is. But if he is really interested in learning about the gospel, pondering your story can become fulfilling and spiritually enlightening as he learns on a deeper level about how the priesthood works.

### WHAT STORIES TO USE

The best stories are short and simple. Don’t distract Anton with details that may be interesting but that don’t support what you’re trying to teach.

That’s not to say that the story has to be boring. Pick something that Anton will relate to. Suppose he loves to play basketball; he might enjoy a story about a boy who was injured while playing a sport and received a priesthood blessing. A good story like that will not only teach about the priesthood, but it will also capture his interest. The Spirit can guide you in selecting an appropriate story to share.

Be careful though. It can be tempting when sharing a

story to embellish the details or tell an experience from a friend of a friend that you don’t know is true. Make sure you’re honest in what you share.

### WHERE TO FIND STORIES

Whether you realize it or not, you’re probably a walking, talking collection of priesthood experiences. Have you been baptized and confirmed? Have you performed proxy ordinances in the temple? Have you received a blessing or been set apart for a calling? If so, you have a story to share.

It’s a great idea to write down your priesthood experiences as they occur. Later, you can refer back to your journal to find stories to share. Family history is another great resource—your ancestors may have had an experience that you could share. The scriptures and general conference are also great places to find stories. Who could forget about Moses parting the Red Sea? The priesthood makes waves. Literally.

As you collect stories, you’ll feel more prepared when opportunities to share the gospel arise. The Holy Ghost can help you recall what you’ve studied: “For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:6).

### WHEN TO TELL STORIES

Sharing your experiences doesn’t have to be scripted. Most of your opportunities to tell others about your experiences—regarding the priesthood or another gospel topic—will come in casual conversation with friends, just like the conversation with Anton.

The Holy Ghost can help you identify teaching moments and guide you to know whether to give a quick answer or to share a story. If you do choose to share a story with someone, be sure to start by providing background information and inviting him or her to look for certain principles. After sharing the story, ask what it means to your listeners instead of telling them. The purpose of sharing an experience isn’t to dominate a conversation or talk about yourself; effective priesthood stories teach others about the Savior and create opportunities for further conversations about the gospel.



## TWO GREAT EXAMPLES

Now that you know why it's important to share stories, let's look at two examples. The story below tells of an experience from one young woman's life. The story at the right is an example of a short and sweet priesthood experience shared in general conference, which is practically

exploding with fantastic stories on all kinds of gospel topics, including the priesthood.

Check out what makes each story great and discover tips for effectively sharing stories yourself.

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EXAMPLE

### HEALED FROM PAIN

1 "When I was young, I had an expander (an orthodontic appliance) in the top of my mouth. One day I developed an infection and my gums swelled up around it. I was in terrible pain, and neither the dentist nor the orthodontist knew what was wrong or how to fix it. All they could do while they tried to figure it out was to give me pain medicine. I stayed home sick from school and spent most of the time sleeping. Every time the medicine wore off, I woke up in pain and cried until the next dose of medicine kicked in.

2 "My mom asked my dad (a priesthood holder) to call one of our home teachers. He came over and helped my father give me a healing blessing. After

the blessing, the pain never woke me up from sleep again. The swelling went down and I was able to stop taking the pain medicine. When I went back to the dentist, he was astonished and still couldn't understand what had been wrong or how it healed. He was a member of our stake, so my mom told him I'd had a priesthood blessing, and then he understood why I was better.

"Ever since that experience, I've had a strong testimony of the true power of the priesthood. Whenever my testimony gets a little shaky, I can look back on this experience and remember what a real miracle it was. I know the Lord loves me and that it was His power that made me better."

Rachel M., Utah, USA



#### 1 GIVE SPECIFIC DETAILS

Notice that Rachel describes specifics from before the priesthood blessing; this will be important to show the contrast of the healing after the blessing.

#### 2 SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE

If you were speaking with nonmembers, you'd want to tell a little more about what priesthood and home teacher mean.

#### 4 TESTIFY OF TRUTH

She concludes her story by sharing a simple but powerful testimony.

#### 3 DESCRIBE CAUSE AND EFFECT

She shares how she was healed by priesthood power. Notice how she explains that her recovery puzzled the dentist. This demonstrates that her healing was a result of the blessing and a gift from our Heavenly Father.

**1 FOCUS YOUR BEGINNING**

Did you notice how focused this is? When you're telling a story, just cut to the chase! Your listeners will appreciate it, and you'll help them know what to look for as they hear the story.

**2 SET THE STAGE**

Check out how this sentence sets the stage for the entire story without giving away the ending. That's classy storytelling.

**5 INVITE ACTION THROUGH DETAILS**

By showing how members of the quorum became actively involved, he helps listeners understand that the priesthood is a principle of action. He also gives ideas for how others can help in their quorums.

**2 EXAMPLE** **HELP IN A TIME OF CRISIS**

**1** "There are many ways bishops and quorum members can help to relieve the suffering and anxiety of the unemployed. Phil's Auto of Centerville, Utah, is a testament of what priesthood leadership and a quorum can accomplish. Phil was a member of an elders quorum and worked as a mechanic at a local automobile repair shop. Unfortunately, the repair shop where Phil worked experienced economic trouble and had to let Phil go from his job. He was devastated by this turn of events.

**2** "On hearing about Phil's job loss, his bishop, Leon Olson, and his elders quorum presidency prayerfully considered ways they could help Phil get back on his feet. After all, he was a fellow quorum member, a brother, and he needed help. They concluded that Phil had the skills to run his own business. One of the quorum members

**3** offered that he had an old barn that perhaps could be used as a repair shop. Other quorum members could help gather needed tools and supplies to equip the new shop. Almost everyone in the quorum could at least help clean the old barn.

"They shared their ideas with Phil; then they shared their plan with the members of their quorum. The barn was cleaned and renovated, the tools gathered, and all was put in order. Phil's Auto was a success and eventually moved to better and more permanent quarters—all because his quorum brothers offered help in a time of crisis.

**4** Priesthood quorums can and must make a difference."

**6** Bishop Richard C. Edgley, former First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, "This is Your Phone Call," *Ensign*, May 2009, 54.

**3 BALANCE DETAILS**

Now that's a great balance of details—enough to explain the situation but not so many as to distract the listeners from the main point of the story.

**4 BE CONCISE**

In just a couple of sentences, Bishop Edgley captures the essence of brotherhood in a priesthood quorum.

**6 DON'T OVERDO IT**

See how he points out the blessings that came through the priesthood. There's not dramatic fanfare or extra detail, but this story shares a powerful message.

**7 TIE IT ALL TOGETHER**

Bishop Edgley's closing ties the whole story together and reminds us of the main point of the experience.

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

**THINGS TO PONDER FOR SUNDAY**

- How has the priesthood blessed your life?
- What experiences could you share with others to help them better understand the priesthood?

**THINGS YOU MIGHT DO**

- Write in your journal about an experience you've had that has strengthened your testimony of the priesthood.
- Share your experience in family home evening, in church, or online at [lds.org/go/storyNE6](http://lds.org/go/storyNE6).

**THINGS I WILL DO**

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