





**By Carol F. McConkie**

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

# Teaching Youth

## HOW TO LEAD IN THE SAVIOR'S WAY

*Our youth are not just future leaders. They are leaders today. We can help them lead like the Savior.*

To parents and leaders of youth, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the delicate balance we need to find: “Invite the young people to act. You have to be there, but you’ve got to get out of the way. You have to provide direction without taking over.”<sup>1</sup>

Parents and leaders can help young men and young women learn principles that will prepare them to lead in righteousness and to build the kingdom of God on the earth.

When I was 14, I met some young women who were excellent leaders. At that time, my family moved across the United States and became members of a new ward. I do not remember who served in the Mia Maid class presidency, but I clearly remember that the young women were particularly kind to me. They sincerely embraced a scared and scrawny new girl as a long-lost friend and made me feel welcome. Coming from Delaware, where I was the only Mormon girl in my junior high school and where the only other Mormon girl I knew lived an hour’s drive from my home, I thought, “*This must be what heaven is like!*”

For the first time in my life, I had a circle of friends who lived the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, invited me to participate in activities, and shared their testimonies of the gospel with me. Their examples of loving-kindness did more to secure me to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at that time than any talk or lesson could have done. In their love and Christlike light, they were the message of the gospel of Christ, and they were the ones to lead and guide me into His fold.

What was it that made my new friends great leaders?

A young missionary defined leadership very simply. He said: “We have to be in the right place at the right time doing the will of the Lord and helping the person who is in need of our help. That is what makes us a leader.”<sup>2</sup> By virtue of who they are and the Light of Christ that shines in them, faithful young men and young women throughout this Church have the capacity to *lead in the Savior’s way* and “help other people become true followers of . . . Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

As leaders we lead, guide, and walk beside our young men and young women. But it is the class and quorum presidencies who are responsible for leading and directing the work of their classes and quorums, including selecting Sunday lessons and planning weekday activities. Class and quorum leaders are called and set apart under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys; thus they have the authority to lead and to strengthen the other youth. They follow the example of the Savior and learn to serve as He served and to minister as He did.

## Opportunities for Youth Leadership

Leadership begins in the home. “Doing our duty to God as parents and leaders begins with leading by example—consistently and diligently living gospel principles at home,” taught Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “This takes daily determination and diligence.”<sup>4</sup> Parents teach the doctrine of Christ. They help youth set and accomplish goals. Personal Progress and Duty to God help youth strengthen their testimonies of Jesus Christ, be prepared to make and keep sacred covenants, and fulfill their divine roles and responsibilities in the family, the home, and the Church.

At church, Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women leaders can help the youth serving in quorum and class presidencies understand their sacred duties and magnify their callings to nurture and strengthen all other quorum and class members.

As adult leaders, we prepare youth to conduct quorum and class meetings and Mutual activities. We meet with youth in presidency meetings as they determine ways to minister to those who are struggling, to include all youth in Sunday lessons, and to plan activities, service projects, camps, and youth conferences.

We encourage youth presidencies to help all quorum and class members participate in every aspect of the work of salvation, including member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel.<sup>5</sup> Youth presidencies help all young men and young women learn the joy and the blessing of serving in the name of the Savior and feeding His sheep.

The leader’s work is not about Pinterest-perfect hand-outs or fact-filled lectures. The leader’s work is to help young men and young women learn and apply principles that will help *them* lead in the Savior’s way. The following are four of those principles.<sup>6</sup>

## Prepare Spiritually

Help youth understand the power of their personal spiritual preparation. Teach them to exercise faith in the covenants they make in the ordinance of the sacrament. Their willingness to take upon them the name of Christ, to remember Him, and to keep His commandments qualifies them to always have the companionship of the Holy Ghost. They are not alone in their service when they are able to

receive, recognize, and act upon the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

They prepare spiritually by seeking guidance in fervent prayer and searching the scriptures for answers. They strive to keep the commandments so that the Holy Ghost will speak to them in their hearts and minds that they may feel and know who needs their help and what they can do. They feel the pure love of Christ for each member of the class or quorum.

Spiritual preparation gives youth the confidence that they are the Lord’s agents and that they are on His errand (see D&C 64:29).



## THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF GUIDANCE

Youth need varying levels of support as they learn to lead. Some can do more on their own; others will need more guidance. Parents can counsel together as they help their children learn to lead, and Young Men and Young Women presidencies can counsel together and with the bishopric as they determine how much guidance to provide each youth in the ward. The goal: to help each young man and young woman improve, beginning where they are.



the glorious truth that Jesus Christ laid down His life and opened the way that all might come unto Him. In gratitude for what He has done, true servants of the Lord reach out and minister in loving kindness to every young man and every young woman, for whom the Savior sacrificed everything.

### Teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Help young men and young women recognize opportunities to teach the gospel and understand that their most important teaching will be their example. As youth live according to the words of the prophets and keep the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, they lead in the Savior's way. By the integrity of their words and actions, they demonstrate what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. They stand as His witnesses without hypocrisy. Then, when they bear testimony, help teach a Sunday lesson, or share gospel truths with their friends, they will be filled with the Spirit and their words will have converting power.

### Lead in the Savior's Way

To lead in the Savior's way is a sacred privilege that will require youth to give their very best as they serve the Lord at home, in the Church, and in the community. Young men and young women who lead in the Savior's way become the message of the gospel of Christ, the answer to someone's prayer, the angels who minister to those in need, and the light of Christ to the world. ■

*Note: See this month's New Era for a youth article on leadership as well as articles on planning effective youth activities.*

### Participate in Councils

Teach youth the fundamental order and the revelatory power of councils as they participate in this divinely instituted process through which the Lord's Church is governed and individuals and families are blessed.<sup>7</sup> Bishopric youth committee and quorum and class presidency meetings are councils where youth learn their duties and receive responsibilities to minister to others.

Members of councils:

- Are unified with and follow the direction of priesthood leaders, who hold priesthood keys.
- Share their thoughts and ideas in a spirit of righteousness, holiness, faith, virtue, patience, charity, and brotherly kindness.
- Work together, as guided by the Holy Ghost, to plan what they will do to help those in need.

### Minister to Others

Youth lead in the Savior's way when they minister with love and kindness. Joseph Smith taught: "Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind."<sup>8</sup>

The Savior taught the precious and priceless value of every soul (see D&C 18:10–15). Help our youth understand

#### NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, "Youth and Family History," [lds.org/youth/family-history/leaders](https://www.lds.org/youth/family-history/leaders).
2. Letter from Carol F. McConkie's grandson, Mar. 13, 2015.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 3.1.
4. Robert D. Hales, "Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation," *Ensign*, May 2010, 95.
5. See *Handbook 2*, 5.
6. See *Handbook 2*, 3.2.
7. See *Handbook 2*, 4.1.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 394, 428.