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Building Spiritual Power in Priesthood Quorums

The Lord has blessed us with priesthood quorums to help tutor us in “having [our] hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.”

Some time ago Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy, with his wife, was serving in an Area Presidency in Chile. One Friday he needed to travel 900 miles (1,450 km) from their home in Santiago to reorganize a stake presidency.

After he arrived at his destination on Friday night, he received a call telling him that his wife was in the hospital. When he spoke with Sister Johnson, she explained that she had fallen down some stairs and shattered her kneecap. Assuring him that she was being well cared for and wouldn't be in surgery until Monday or Tuesday, she encouraged him to finish his assignment to reorganize the stake and preside at the stake conference.

Calmed by her words, Elder Johnson immediately sent an email to his quorum leader in Salt Lake City to report the situation. Then he made plans to continue his assignment. There is a lesson to be learned in his response: first, he reported the situation to his quorum leader, and *then* he went ahead with his assignment.

The Quorums of the Seventy are organized in such a way that each member has specific stewardship over others, including tender watchcare for emeritus members of the quorum. Because of assignments around the world, quorum members normally cannot visit in person; however, they keep in contact through telephone calls, emails, texts, and other electronic means. Each member is asked to advise his quorum leader immediately of any significant changes in personal or family situations, which is exactly what Elder Johnson did.

In Elder Johnson's case, his priesthood leader was Elder Claudio R. M. Costa, who was then serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. Elder Costa called Elder Johnson the next morning while Elder Johnson was in the middle of interviewing local leaders. Elder Costa felt that Elder Johnson should return home but listened carefully as Elder Johnson explained why he felt his wife was all right and he could finish the stake reorganization. Elder Costa told Elder Johnson to continue while he did some checking.



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About two hours later Elder Costa called Elder Johnson and told him that he had talked with quorum leaders about the situation and that they felt he needed to be with Sister Johnson. Elder Johnson was advised that a ticket was waiting for him at the airport and that Elder Carlos H. Amado was on his way to finish the reorganization of the stake presidency.

When Elder Johnson arrived at the hospital, he found his wife in a great deal of pain. Adding to her distress was the fact that she didn't speak the language of the medical staff that surrounded her. She needed her husband. The inspired, brotherly concern of his quorum leaders had brought Elder Johnson to her side.

"I feel cared for in this quorum," said Elder Johnson, "and there is a lot of faith and energy behind that care. I

truly feel part of a quorum. I think that if I were ever called into the presidency of an elders quorum, I would be a better president because of my experience in this one."

I agree. The unity and love I see among my brethren could serve as a model for all priesthood quorums. If that model were emulated, quorums and members throughout the Church would be greatly blessed.

The Source of a Quorum's Strength

There is great power in Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums—or there can be! This power draws upon the God-given authority to act in His name and embodies the testimony, strength,

and whole-souled devotion of individual members.

The result is magnificent: members of quorums and their families become stronger spiritually, more secure personally, and more effective disciples of Jesus Christ. I have seen this synergy at work shaping a remarkable brotherhood unlike anything that exists outside the Lord's Church.

I am reminded of an insight President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, once shared. He said: "I have learned over the years that the strength in a quorum doesn't come from the number of priesthood holders in it. Nor does it come automatically from the age and maturity of the members. Rather, the strength of a quorum comes in large measure from how completely its members are united in righteousness."¹

When quorum members unite in righteousness, the powers of heaven flow unimpeded into their lives and are magnified in the service they extend to one another, to their families, to the Church, and to the communities in which they live.

Seventy-six years ago, Elder Stephen L Richards, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, defined a quorum as "first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit."² That classic definition is powerfully illustrated by the Quorums of the Seventy.

The Quorum as a Class

Each week the members of the Seventy who are living in the Salt Lake City area meet in a quorum meeting at Church headquarters. There they take turns instructing one another in Church doctrine, practices, and policy in accordance with the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:122).

These meetings are treasured experiences in which inspiration comes and brotherhood is strengthened. A spirit of camaraderie and a feeling of mutual support and love permeate these meetings. Because not all members of the Seventy can attend, the meetings are recorded and made available through the Internet for members serving away from Church headquarters.

My quorum brother Elder Don R. Clarke describes these meetings as “spiritual feasts of doctrine and application.” When he served in an international Area Presidency, he said, “We looked forward to reviewing [the videos] weekly in our Area Presidency meeting. There were times when the subject was exactly what we needed to have addressed.”

Thanks to these recorded quorum meetings and the watchcare the Seventy and their families feel from leaders of the Church and their quorum brothers, “we never feel isolated,” Elder Kevin R. Duncan said. “No matter where we serve in the world, we never feel alone.”

When all members of an Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood quorum are included, a strength and a spirit of

brotherhood develop as quorum members teach one another and share a variety of insights. Many quorums have multiple teachers, which is a good practice.

Quorum leaders throughout the Church could follow the example of the Seventy. For those who cannot attend quorum meetings, find ways to include them. Just imagine what impact a phone call could have on a high priest who might be homebound or confined to a care facility. Would he not appreciate a call from his quorum brother sharing what was discussed in their quorum meeting? Technology can easily facilitate that sharing.

The Quorum as a Fraternity

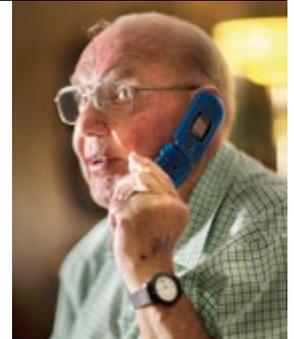
Quorum meetings can also be improved by agendas that focus on truly important matters. Too often quorum business and announcements take up time that could be better spent on giving watchcare and building brotherhood. An effective quorum agenda might well focus on the three aspects Elder Richards mentioned in his definition—class instruction, brotherhood, and service.

In our quorum we share minutes and announcements by email. In our presidency meetings the first thing on our agenda is the welfare of our quorum members. We ask who is in need. We pray by name for quorum members—current and released—their children, and their grandchildren. Often our agenda is adjusted to discuss what we can do to help.

Quorum business and service assignments



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need attention, but wise quorum leaders will spend less time on dates and announcements (send those in an email, or list them on a handout) and more time on doctrine, on building brotherhood, and on how the quorum can reach out to others.

As fraternities, priesthood quorums have no equal in the world. Years ago President

Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, explained that “in ancient days when a man was appointed to a select body, his

commission, always written in Latin, outlined the responsibility of the organization, defined who should be members, and then invariably contained the words: *quorum vos unum*, meaning ‘of whom we will that you be one.’”³

Nothing unites human hearts better than the Spirit of God. Under the influence of the Spirit, encouraged by the righteousness of quorum members and a spirit of mutual concern, quorums can be sources of great spiritual power for quorum members and their families, as well as others they serve.

In addition, social interactions are important. A strong quorum will meet together occasionally in social activities that present opportunities for quorum members and their families to interact in a relaxed, enjoyable way. Sociality is an important part of building and maintaining brotherhood.

The Quorum as a Service Unit

In many ways the brotherhood in priesthood quorums powers the service that

quorums provide. Priesthood quorums, working together as one in the spirit of brotherhood and love, can perform miracles.

I again think of Elder Paul and Sister Jill Johnson. They have experienced a number of serious family challenges. They have a daughter and a young grandson who have struggled with cancer. In both cases the prayers and fasting of Elder Johnson’s quorum members have made a miraculous difference.

The Church and the communities in which Church units exist are blessed many times over by the faithful service of priesthood quorums. That service becomes powerful when quorum members unite their strength in righteous, Christlike love.

Often I have observed that strength and love come at the cost of sacrifice, shared in large part by the wives of the Seventy. A number of years ago I visited Elder Claudio and Sister Margareth Costa while they served in Bogotá, Colombia. After dinner one evening the Costas had an online video conversation with some of their grandchildren. As Elder Costa was translating for me, I learned that the grandchildren were referring to Sister Costa as “Computer Grandma.” At the end of the conversation, two grandchildren ages two and four embraced the computer monitor, giving Sister Costa a hug. Sister Costa later informed me that those grandchildren thought she and Elder Costa lived inside the computer.

Not being close to children and grandchildren for important events is particularly hard on mothers and grandmothers. However, they serve because they love the Lord and feel vested in their husbands’ calling.

“Our wives contribute in significant ways,” Elder Duncan observes. “Not only do they

support their husbands with the heavy loads they bear, but they also interact with the members and leaders throughout the world in inspiring ways. Our wives are true examples of cheerful consecration.”

That kind of unity among the Seventy and their wives has great power. I remember being on assignment in Japan and traveling between cities with Elder Yoon Hwan and Sister Bon Choi, then serving in the Asia North Area Presidency. I knew of a problem in their home country of Korea, and I brought it up. After I prodded her a little, Sister Choi told me of the serious nature of the problem. She then made suggestions that proved extremely helpful in finding a solution.

President Thomas S. Monson has reminded us, “Brethren, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service.”⁴

Indeed, true brotherhood is a measure of godliness. The closer we approach that ideal, the closer we approach the divine. So united are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in love, spiritual power, and knowledge that the

scriptures refer to Them as being one (see John 17:21–23; 2 Nephi 31:21; 3 Nephi 11:27, 36). The Lord has blessed us with priesthood quorums to help tutor us in the kind of unity tenderly described in the book of Mosiah: “having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21).

It is my prayer that every quorum leader and member will reach out to each brother and learn of his and his family’s needs. Designating a specific Sunday each month to prayerfully hold discussions in quorum meetings would assist in accomplishing this vital task. With knowledge of needs, quorum members will be able to find ways to bless lives and partake of the powers of heaven in greater abundance, thus increasing spiritual power in priesthood quorums. ■

For more ideas on strengthening your quorum, see Henry B. Eyring, “Bind Up Their Wounds,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2013, 58.

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “A Priesthood Quorum,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 43.
2. Stephen L Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “The Quorum,” in *A Royal Priesthood* (Melchizedek Priesthood personal study guide, 1975–76), 131.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “To the Rescue,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 48; *Liahona*, July 2001, 57.

THE SEVENTY: A HERITAGE OF SERVICE

The Seventy is a priesthood calling to be a witness of Jesus Christ and to assist the Lord’s prophets.

When the burden of leadership overwhelmed Moses, the Lord told him to gather “seventy men of the elders of Israel, . . . and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee” (Numbers 11:16–17).



Later, during His mortal ministry, the Savior “appointed . . . seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face” (Luke 10:1).

Today, the Lord again calls Seventy “to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve . . . , in building up the church and regulating all the affairs . . . in all nations” (D&C 107:34). They are presided over by seven presidents. The Lord indicates that as many Seventy can be called as the needs of the Church require. (See D&C 107:93–96.)