

Dear Brethren,

Happy New Year! We are excited to be with you in our Area Council meeting on Friday, January 10, 2014, in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. Lunch will be served first, in the Jade Room on the mezzanine level. During lunch we will be discussing a number of important issues, so please arrive before 12:00 p.m. The area council meeting will be held in the Relief Society Room, which also is located on the mezzanine level.

We attach agendas for the lunch discussion and for the area council meeting. As you will note in the area council agenda, you will each be given four minutes (not to exceed) to report specific actions you have taken to accomplish the goals outlined in the “Utah Areas Mission Presidents Seminar Action Items September 2013,” which also is attached. We hope to learn best practices that produce measurable results. As a result of your presentations we will be able to counsel together and gain insights on how to continue to make significant progress in the work of salvation.

We also attach a copy of the talk given by Elder D. Todd Christofferson in General Conference Training on April 5, 2013, “The Office and Ministry of the Seventy.” Please take time to review and meditate on this important subject. Please note that we have obtained specific permission to share this talk by email. Please do not share the talk or any portion thereof with anyone. It is for your eyes only.

Thank you for your dedicated service. We look forward to a wonderful time together on Friday.

Warmest personal regards,

L. Whitney Clayton

THE OFFICE AND MINISTRY OF A SEVENTY
General Conference Training Meeting
April 5, 2013
Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

I have the honor today of addressing the subject “The Office and Ministry of a Seventy.”¹ As I understand it, my assignment includes both *the Seventy*, a priesthood body, and also *a Seventy*, the individual. My hope is that a discussion of the nature of this priesthood office will provide appropriate context for comments about the men who serve as Seventies.

In taking one’s bearings in the present and looking toward the future, it is important to look to the past. We look backward in history to learn how we got where we are and to review and recommit to the fundamentals that anchor the work—the work of establishing the kingdom of God on earth so that the kingdom of heaven may come.

The history of the Seventy in this dispensation began in the early years of the Restoration. On 8 February 1835, the Prophet Joseph Smith called Elders Brigham Young and Joseph Young to his home in Kirtland, Ohio, and related a vision he had received about those who had died in Zion’s Camp. He then said: “I wish to notify all the brethren living in the branches, within a reasonable distance from this place, to meet at a general conference on Saturday next. I shall then and there appoint twelve Special Witnesses, to open the door of the Gospel to foreign nations, and you,’ said he (speaking to Brother Brigham), ‘will be one of them.’” After explaining their duties, “he then turned to Elder Joseph Young with quite an earnestness, as though the vision of his mind was extended still further, and addressing him, said, ‘Brother Joseph, the Lord has made you President of the Seventies.’”²

There is profound significance in the fact that the quorums of the Twelve and the Seventy were restored together.

A Seventy Is a General Church Officer

In the years that followed, numerous Quorums of Seventy were organized. There were 35 such quorums when the Saints left Nauvoo. Like the Quorum of the Twelve, these Seventies quorums originally functioned at the general Church level. For much of the 20th century, however, with the Church relatively small and dispersed, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve placed the seventies under stake supervision. With the reestablishment of the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1975, and its expansion over the next decade, the seventies quorums in the stakes were discontinued in 1986. Additional Quorums of Seventy have been organized, now numbering eight, and the Seventy have again assumed their scriptural role as general rather than local priesthood officers.

Along with the Apostles, the Seventy are referred to in the scriptures as “traveling ministers [or traveling elders], unto the Gentiles first and also unto the Jews.”³ The Twelve are

called “traveling councilors” or a “traveling high council.”⁴ In contrast, high priests and elders are identified as “standing presidents” and “standing ministers.”⁵ Thus, Apostles and Seventies travel the earth teaching the gospel in its purity and ensuring that the Church is one no matter how large it grows or how far it spreads, and, at the same time, high priests and elders (assisted by the Aaronic Priesthood and auxiliaries) minister at home and shepherd the flock in their lives day by day.

This perfect duality, however, would not be possible if the seventies were still in the stakes, since the Apostles would be alone in their oversight of the Church—an impossible task. As its growth accelerated in the latter half of the last century and the Church began to reach the far corners of the earth, the Lord was ready with the revelations needed to move the Seventy in an orderly process to their full, scripturally-defined service at the side of the Apostles. Now it makes perfect sense to say to the Twelve (the traveling high council) that they are to call upon the Seventy (their fellow traveling ministers) for assistance “*instead of any others.*”⁶

A Seventy Has Two Overarching Duties

As with the Apostles, the first and preeminent duty of a Seventy is to act as a special or especial witness of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world. This fundamental responsibility was foreshadowed in the call of the seventy elders of Moses’s time who, gathered at the foot of Mt. Sinai, “saw the God of Israel.”⁷ In the revelations of this dispensation the Lord states:

“The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.”⁸

“Which quorum [the Seventy] is instituted for traveling elders to bear record of my name in all the world, wherever the traveling high council, mine apostles, shall send them to prepare a way before my face.”⁹

A Seventy’s sure witness of the resurrected Lord may come in any number of ways, perhaps most convincingly as a pure communication from the Holy Spirit to his spirit with a power beyond words. It is not that other members of the Church lack a similar testimony, but a Seventy is an *ordained* witness, and his testimony carries the added authority and power of his priesthood office.

The second overriding duty of a Seventy is to share the burden of the Apostles (the First Presidency and the Twelve) and extend the reach of their ministry. As Moses faced the increasingly heavy burdens incident to leading over a million people, he lamented to the Lord, “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.”¹⁰

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

“And I will come down and talk with thee there: *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, that thou bear it not thyself alone.* . . .

“And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto [Moses], and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.”¹¹

This ancient pattern of administration applies today:

“The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews. . . .

“It is the duty of the traveling high council to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel, instead of any others.”¹²

It is an indescribable consolation for the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve to know that the Lord has provided not only seventy elders, but multiple quorums of Seventy upon whom He has put His Spirit and who share the charge to build up the Church and regulate its affairs in all nations.¹³

The Office of Seventy Presupposes an Apostolic Authority

With his high and holy calling, a Seventy fills an apostolic role. In December 1835, the Prophet Joseph Smith noted in his journal: “This day the Council of the Seventy met to render an account of their travels and ministry, since they were ordained to that Apostleship. The meeting was interesting indeed, and my heart was made glad while listening to the relation of those that had been laboring in the vineyard of the Lord, with such marvelous success.”¹⁴

This reference to the Seventies’ “apostleship” was not unique. President Brigham Young used the term “Seventy Apostles,”¹⁵ and President Joseph F. Smith stated, “The seventies are called to be assistants to the twelve apostles; indeed they are apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, subject to the direction of the Twelve, and it is their duty to respond to the call of the Twelve, under the direction of the First Presidency of the Church.”¹⁶ I do not want to confuse the offices of Apostle and Seventy. President Boyd K. Packer has stated, “While it is clear that the Seventy have apostolic authority, the Seventy are not ordained apostles—they are ordained *seventies* with the attendant gifts, authority, and responsibilities.”¹⁷ Rather it is my hope that every Seventy will recognize the sacred nature of his ministry and the apostolic elements of his call.

A Seventy Acts Individually and in Council

A Seventy may labor and fill assignments anywhere in the world or at Church headquarters. A particularly crucial duty is service in Area Presidencies and in related councils. During President Gordon B. Hinckley’s administration it was determined that Area Presidencies would administer larger geographic areas and be responsible for the whole program of the

Church, both spiritual and temporal. This required presidencies comprised of Seventies serving full-time assisted by and sitting in council with Area Seventies serving part-time.

In council settings, whether it be a presidency, a committee, or a regular council, a Seventy is a vigorous exponent of the actions and directions he feels would be right. He does the thinking and the praying that enable him to be an active, contributing member. He does not feel he needs to be heard at length on every subject and certainly does not attempt to manipulate people or the council process to get his proposals adopted. He advocates for his ideas but in the end lets them rise or fall on their own merits. If one of his proposals should be adopted, it becomes the property of the council, so to speak, and he does not seek or claim credit.

The Area Seventies follow this pattern in their Coordinating Councils. Here we must remember that a Seventy works by keys that he himself does not hold. Members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles hold all the keys of the kingdom.¹⁸ Each of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy receives keys to preside over the Quorums of the Seventy as he is set apart by the First Presidency. But it is authority granted under the keys of the Apostles, either by delegation or by assignment, by which the Seventy perform their labors. A Seventy respects the keys held by stake, mission, and quorum presidents and bishops, neither supplanting nor overriding the exercise of those keys. It is a critical element of the ministry of a Seventy to obtain by persuasion, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned¹⁹ the full and willing participation of all members of a council where, by assignment, he presides.

A Seventy Is a Man of Character

In examining the work of a Seventy, we must not overlook the character and qualities essential to his success. Many of these qualities are set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 107, verse 30. I will comment on a few that I believe deserve particular emphasis.

Meekness is a trait that is fundamental in itself and that also sustains many other virtues. Moses was described as “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”²⁰ The Savior described Himself as “meek and lowly in heart.”²¹ Bearing in mind the strength and power of the Son of God, of Moses, and of others known for meekness, we must conclude that meekness cannot mean weakness. It is, rather, great strength under perfect control. It is submission to the mind and will of God.

Meekness produces a particular kind of leader—the servant-leader. “He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.”²² This is the Seventy in whom the First Presidency and the Twelve, and indeed the Lord Himself, can have full confidence and trust. He accepts his calling with modesty and his release with grace. His agenda is the agenda of the First Presidency and the Twelve. He does not feel he owns any assignment, any geographic area, or any subject. He is teachable, and rather than resent correction he will seek it. Likewise, he will not fail to offer correction to others “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost.”²³ He recognizes his weaknesses but is not immobilized by them. He seeks strength in counsel and proceeds with confidence, even boldness. A meek Seventy, “anxiously engaged in a good cause,” does many things of his own free will and brings to pass “much righteousness,” for the power is in him.²⁴

A Seventy seeks knowledge and teaches truth. He possesses a broad understanding of gospel doctrines and their application. He knows the history of the Church. He searches the scriptures, learns the principles and procedures of Church government, and as Mormon, is “quick to observe,”²⁵ apprehending even the unwritten order of things. A Seventy is a watchman on the tower, an oracle of God. His goal is not “to become popular”²⁶ but to feed the sheep and glorify the Master.²⁷ In teaching, he will focus on ends, not just means; on outcomes, not just tasks; on becoming, not just doing. Elder Dallin H. Oaks once observed, “We are clearly more skillful at building temples than we are at filling them.”²⁸ Above all, a Seventy recognizes that the very purpose of his ordination is “to preach [the gospel of Jesus Christ] *by the Spirit, even the Comforter* which was sent forth to teach the truth.”²⁹

A Seventy is a man of integrity. His character is fixed and does not vary according to circumstances. He is the same whether before kings or among peasants, whether in the light or in the dark. Moment by moment and day by day he is consistently a disciple of Jesus Christ. A Seventy takes particular care to maintain financial integrity. He accepts the counsel of the Brethren regarding debt, investments, and honorable dealings as being more applicable to himself than anyone else. When Elder M. Russell Ballard was called to the Seventy, President Spencer W. Kimball asked him, “Are you financially secure?” Elder Ballard’s considered response was, “President Kimball, I have more assets than I have liabilities. I am not completely out of debt, but I have ample assets to cover my obligations.” President Kimball paused for a moment and then said, “I will accept that answer and encourage you to eliminate any personal debt.” Elder Ballard, of course, did so.³⁰

The Savior invites us to a life of integrity with these words: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”³¹ A Seventy dutifully takes up his cross and walks in the pattern of the Master. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” These words are found in chapter 16 of Matthew, verses 24 and 25. A footnote quoting the Joseph Smith Translation adds this: “And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments.”³² May it be said of each one as Jesus said of Hyrum Smith, “I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me.”³³

Perhaps the quality of a Seventy’s relationship with his wife and his children is the best measure of his character. President Henry B. Eyring has observed that in marriage our goal is to create in mortality “a relationship that can be taken into the presence of God the Father, His Beloved Son, and of angels.”³⁴ A Seventy loves his wife “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”³⁵ His success as a Seventy is tied to the success and strength of his marriage. A Seventy also gives himself for his children, accepting in partnership with his wife the “sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live.”³⁶

A Seventy is a brother to the members of his quorum. He owes them a duty of loyalty, a duty to seek their welfare, and a duty to support and strengthen them in their service. He may rightfully expect the same from his quorum brethren. I recall that when Elder Neil L. Andersen and I joined the First Quorum of the Seventy, I expected to be accepted as a member of the quorum in full fellowship only after some probationary period had passed. I didn't know if it would be months or years. To my surprise, however, despite our youth and inexperience, both of us were immediately received as brothers and accepted as equals by those we had long admired and revered as senior leaders and teachers.

No Seventy can permit such ugly sentiments as jealousy or envy to interfere with the unity of his quorum and his relationship with each member. He will rejoice at any recognition that comes to one of his fellows as if the honor had come to him. He knows he is not diminished by the elevation or accomplishment of another quorum member, but that the success of one is the success of all, and glory bestowed on one reflects on each. A Seventy desires simply to make his own best contribution.

Quorum members have a right to look to their presiding officers for a model in fulfilling their priesthood duty. "It is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy."³⁷ The Seven Presidents are with us today, as well as a number of others who have served in that calling. We honor them. Each embodies the finest qualities of a Seventy. In an earlier dispensation, when "the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face . . . he said unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."³⁸ Today, the "seven presidents are to choose other seventy besides the first seventy to whom they belong, . . . and also other seventy, until seven times seventy, if the labor in the vineyard of necessity requires it."³⁹ We can attest that the Presidency of the Seventy is fulfilling this duty admirably well, and our prayers for more laborers in the vineyard are being answered.

Our concluding question is always "Therefore, what?" In response, I offer the following: surely the Seventy will play a greater role in this last dispensation than in any prior. For example, from the days of the Savior to the present, the Seventy have been allied with missionary work, but it is in our time that "this Gospel of the Kingdom [must] be preached in *all the world*, . . . and then shall the end come."⁴⁰ The realization of this prophecy will depend in large measure on your ability to convert the long-standing dream of member-missionary collaboration into a new reality. Additionally, only the Seventy can personally reach all the stake presidents and help them claim their mantle and the endowment of divine power that comes with it. Our current and future initiatives in strengthening home and Church through the priesthood, rescuing the lost sheep, gospel teaching and learning, family history, and proxy temple work will rise or fall based on your endorsement and implementation. The deepening conversion of Church members, if it is to happen on a broad scale, will require your leadership and influence. It is not too much to say that all the strivings of the Apostles to preserve marriage and family in the Church and in society will fail unless coupled with your teaching and testifying. And so it goes—the engagement of the Seventy on all matters that form part of our shared mission is simply indispensable.

Dear brethren of the Seventy, we of the Twelve love you and invoke God's constant watchcare upon you. We are your servants. We rely on your intellect and inspiration, your loyalty and goodness. And with you we bear witness to all that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, the resurrected Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹In addition to the scriptures, sources consulted include (1) a collection of presentations by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on Sept. 29, 1987, titled, "A Standard of Service for the Seventy"; (2) presentations led by President Boyd K. Packer in General Authority/Area Seventy training on Sept. 26, 2006 ("The Seventy"), and Apr. 2, 2009 ("The Seventy: Their Origins and Destiny"); (3) Elder L. Aldin Porter, "A History of the Latter-day Seventy," *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, and Elder Earl C. Tingey, "Area Authority Seventies," *Liahona*, Oct. 2002 and (4) my own years of service in the First Quorum and Presidency of the Seventy.

²L. Aldin Porter, "A History of the Latter-day Seventy," *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, 15; see also *History of the Church*, 2:181, note.

³D&C 107:97; see also D&C 124:139.

⁴D&C 107:23, 33; D&C 124:139.

⁵D&C 124:133-35; 137.

⁶D&C 107:38

⁷Exodus 24:10.

⁸D&C 107:25.

⁹D&C 124:139.

¹⁰Numbers 11:14.

¹¹Numbers 11:16-17, 25; emphasis added.

¹²D&C 107:34, 38; see also D&C 124:139.

¹³See D&C 107:95-96

¹⁴Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 2:346.

¹⁵*Deseret News*, June 6, 1877.

¹⁶Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (1986), 183.

¹⁷"A Seventy Is an Especial Witness of Jesus Christ," Special Training Session for the Seventy, Sept. 29, 1987, 9.

¹⁸See D&C 27:12-13; 112:30-32.

¹⁹See D&C 121:41.

²⁰Numbers 12:3.

²¹Matthew 11:29.

²²D&C 50:26; see also Matthew 20:25-28.

²³D&C 121:43.

²⁴D&C 58:27-28.

²⁵Mormon 1:2.

²⁶Alma 1:3.

²⁷We should remember the clear counsel of President Spencer W. Kimball:

"No one has the right to give his own private interpretations when he has been invited to teach in the organizations of the Church; he is a guest; he has been given an authoritative position and the stamp of approval is placed upon him, and those whom he teaches are justified in assuming that, having been chosen and sustained in the proper order, he represents the Church and the things which he teaches are approved by the Church. No matter how brilliant he may be and how many new truths he may think he has found, he has no right to go beyond the program of the Church" (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 532-33).

²⁸"A Seventy Is a Teacher," Special Training Session for the Seventy, Sept. 29, 1987, 3.

²⁹D&C 50:14; emphasis added; see also D&C 42:14; 63:64.

³⁰"A Seventy Is a Man of Integrity," Special Training Session for the Seventy, Sep. 29, 1987, 2.

³¹3 Nephi 27:27.

³²Matthew 16:24, footnote *d*. A further insight comes with the addition of one word in Luke, chapter 9, verse 23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me" (emphasis added).

³³D&C 124:15; see also verse 20.

³⁴Henry B. Eyring, General Authority Training, Sept. 28, 2011.

³⁵Ephesians 5:25.

³⁶ “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

³⁷ D&C 107:93.

³⁸ Luke 10:1–2.

³⁹ D&C 107:95–96.

⁴⁰ Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31; emphasis added.