

## President Dahlquist's Four T's of Scouting

September, 2004

Priesthood and Young Men leaders are the vital link in the lives of these young men. Therefore, it is critical that men be called who can and will make a difference in the lives of our young men. I give you five guidelines for ensuring that every deacon is prepared and worthy to be ordained an elder and serve a mission. The first has to do with selecting youth leaders, and the remaining four have often been referred to as the "Four Ts of Youth Leadership": testimony, training, time, and tenure.

First, call good youth men to serve with the youth. Look for men who can be examples to your young men, who relate well to the youth and yet are able to keep a bit of a distance so they can still inspire them and lift them to greater heights. Look for men who can say, "Come, follow me—to the temple and on a mission." Listen for the promptings of the Spirit; you will know whom to call.

Most importantly (and this comprises the first T), ensure that the new leader is a man of character who has a strong *testimony* of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Bishop H. Burke Peterson, formerly the Presiding Bishop, stated in 1975, "The primary reason why we have youth activities is to give our youth opportunities to associate with men and women who have testimonies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." And President Kimball often quoted Walter MacPeck in stating: "Boys need lots of heroes like Lincoln and Washington. But they also need to have some heroes close by. They need to know some man of towering strength and basic integrity, personally. They need to meet them on the street, to hike and camp with them, to see them in close-to-home, everyday, down-to-earth situations; to feel close enough to them to ask questions and to talk things over man-to-man with them" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 71; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 47). Our young men need heroes today as never before, heroes who are men of character and who have testimonies of the gospel.

Next, training. Along with testimony, training is essential to all we do. A recent graduate from a trade school must generally complete an apprenticeship before he can be employed. For a physician, it is called residency and internship. All jobs requiring competency require training.

It is no different in the Aaronic Priesthood. What makes us think that just because it is God's work, we don't need to be trained? The Prophet Joseph went through years of training at the feet of Moroni and other heavenly beings for his marvelous work (see [D&C 128:19–21](#)). So we too must become qualified for the work. The School of the Prophets was established to train and qualify the early leaders of the Church. In addition, in the Doctrine and Covenants we are instructed, "Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence" ([D&C 107:99](#)).

As leaders we need to know where we are going, or else we will go astray. We must be trained and directed; we must catch the vision. It is the same with the young men. When they are charting unknown waters, we must be close to them, often leading the way so they can follow and so they can be prepared to lead the next time.

Each priesthood and Young Men leader has the responsibility of instructing the leaders of his assigned quorum in their duties in the Aaronic Priesthood and helping them catch a vision for their calling and fulfill it. These duties are outlined in the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2* in the section on Aaronic Priesthood. This section also has some excellent resource materials for Aaronic Priesthood presidency leadership training.

In the United States and Canada, we have a wonderful partnership with the Boy Scouts of America. Scouting in these countries provides a vital application phase of the learning process for our Aaronic Priesthood quorums. I have found an unexplained reluctance on the part of some priesthood leaders to implement fully Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing as the activity arm of their quorums and to become trained themselves.

As a newly called Scoutmaster, I think I did a reasonable job. We accomplished much, advancement was passable, and we garnered a number of awards at our annual council Scout camp. But not until I finished my basic Scouting training and then Wood Badge training did I realize how much more we could have done to strengthen our boys.

Brethren, it is time we received the training that is there to help us become better priesthood and Young Men leaders and recognize that Scouting is a vital part of the Aaronic Priesthood activity program and can help greatly to build better-prepared missionaries, better husbands and fathers, help prepare our young men to receive the ordinances of the temple, and help reactivate those who have drifted.

Third, *time*—it takes time each week to be an effective leader of youth. It is much, much more than an hour on Sunday in quorum meeting and an hour-or-so during the week. It takes preparation to make a difference in the lives of boys. It is also vital that you become fully engaged in their lives and their activities. Be involved with the youth, and in time you will find that they will develop confidence and trust in you.

Finally, *tenure*. When I was stake president, I would tell our bishops, "In this stake, when we speak of youth leader tenure in callings, we spell it t-e-n y-e-a-r. It takes time in a calling before the youth build what missionaries have called a "relationship of trust." That someone is qualified to serve in another calling is not sufficient reason to release a Scoutmaster to become a counselor in an elders quorum presidency or for any other calling. Unless the Spirit *shouts*, I have found it a good rule of thumb to leave Young Men leaders in their calling for a sufficient length of time to be trained, to apply what they have learned, and to make a difference in the lives of the young men they serve.

It is often very difficult to find good leaders of young men. If they are good, leave them there. If you must change them, change them to another age group, but leave them where they can make a difference in the lives of young men and in the generations unnumbered that follow.