

Brethren, it is my prayer that we may so live that we, too, may touch heaven and be similarly blessed. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast in the Tabernacle and also the Sunday morn-

ing session which follows must be in their seats by 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in your driving.

We thank the combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus for the inspiring music this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Hosanna." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, brethren, if you'll bear with me for a few minutes I'd like to express some thoughts if I may be inspired by the Spirit. First let me say that I have appreciated all that has been said in this meeting. Much has been spoken to the young men. I endorse all of it. I hope that you have had impressed upon your minds the counsel you have heard. If you follow it, it will bless your lives, now and through all the years to come.

Counselors are important

As we come to the conclusion of this meeting, I want to talk with you about a particular subject.

In a previous general priesthood meeting, I spoke about the duty of bishops. I discussed the entire field of their responsibilities. I suppose none of you have remembered that, but I recall doing so nevertheless.

Tonight, I think I should like to talk with you about counselors. There are twice as many counselors as there are bishops and presidents, and they are important.

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, has created in this church what we call presidencies. Essentially, all quorums and organizations are presided over by a presidency, except the Council of the Twelve Apostles, where there is one president of the Quorum, and

the Quorums of the Seventy, where there are seven presidents. I think I can understand why there is no presidency of the Twelve. The Council consists of twelve mature men, each of whom has comparable leadership responsibilities. The number is relatively small. Furthermore, the entire Twelve is a very close-knit body, with every man free to express himself on any matter that comes before the Quorum. Evidently, there is no need for a presidency of three to preside over the remaining nine brethren. All are seasoned by long experience. They are men who have been called with a special calling.

In the case of the Seventy, the number is large and flexible in terms of the number of quorums that might be organized. Each of the presidents, who is called from the First Quorum of Seventy, is coequal with the others, with one of the seven being denoted as the senior president.

In the case of the priests quorum, the bishop serves as president. But whether it be a bishopric, stake presidency, Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthood quorum presidency, mission presidency, temple presidency, auxiliary organization presidency, Area Presidency, or the First Presidency of the Church, there is a president with counselors.

Experiences as a counselor

I think I know from personal experience something about serving as a counselor. I think I know something about his place and the parameters of his responsibility.

In the large ward in which I grew up, there were five quorums of deacons. Each was presided over by a presidency of three boys. My first responsibility in the Church, the first office I ever held, was counselor to the boy who presided over our deacons quorum. Our good bishop called me in and talked with me about this calling. I was tremendously impressed. I was worried and concerned. I was by nature, believe it or not, a rather shy and backward boy, and I think this call to serve as a counselor in a deacons quorum was of as much concern to me, in terms of my age and experience, as is my present responsibility in terms of my age and experience.

I subsequently served in the presidencies of other priesthood quorums. I served as a counselor in the stake Sunday School superintendency, as it was then called, before I became the stake superintendent. I served as a counselor in the stake presidency before I was named stake president. And, as all of you know, I have served as a counselor to two Presidents of the Church, two wonderful and dedicated and inspiring leaders.

Selecting counselors

There are several cardinal principles with reference to counselors. In the first place, the presiding officer selects his own counselors. They are not chosen by others and forced upon him. However, it is necessary in most circumstances that his selections be approved by higher authority. For instance, in the organization of a stake, which occurs under direction of a General Authority, a president is carefully and prayerfully chosen. He is then asked to nominate men to serve as his counselors, and it is expected that the General Authority

will approve the selection before the men are interviewed.

It is imperative that the president himself select his counselors because theirs must be a compatible relationship. He must have absolute confidence in them. They must have confidence in him. They must work together in a spirit of mutual trust and respect. The counselors are not the president. In certain circumstances, they may act in his behalf, but this is a delegated authority. What, then, are some of the duties of a counselor?

An assistant

He is *an assistant to his president*. Regardless of the organization, the assignment of president is a heavy and burdensome one. Even for the deacons quorum president, if he performs his duty well, there is much of responsibility, for he is accountable for the activity and well-being of the boys of his quorum.

As an assistant, the counselor is not the president. He does not assume responsibility and move out ahead of his president.

In presidency meetings, each counselor is free to speak his mind on all issues that come before the presidency. However, it is the prerogative of the president to make the decision, and it is the duty of the counselors to back him in that decision. His decision then becomes their decision, regardless of their previous ideas.

The president, if he is wise, will assign to these chosen assistants particular duties and then leave them free to perform, requiring from them accountability for what happens.

A partner

A counselor is a partner. A presidency can be a wonderful relationship, a friendship where three brethren, working unitedly, have a close and satisfying fellowship. With delegation of responsibility, they move independently

only to a limited degree. All three, unitedly, have responsibility for the work of the ward, the quorum, the stake, the auxiliary organization, or whatever.

Such a partnership provides a safety valve. The wise writer of Proverbs tells us that "in . . . counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). When problems arise, when difficult decisions face us, it is wonderful to have those with whom we can talk with confidence and trust.

I recall that as a boy we had our presidency meetings. Our president would present whatever business was before him. We would talk about it. And then we would go forward, having had our discussion, to work to bring about the desired result.

No president in any organization in the Church is likely to go ahead without the assurance that his counselors feel good about the proposed program. A man or woman thinking alone, working alone, arriving at his or her own conclusions, can take action which might prove to be wrong. But when three kneel together in prayer, discuss every aspect of the problem which is before them, and under the impressions of the Spirit reach a united conclusion, then we may have the assurance that the decision is in harmony with the will of the Lord.

I can assure all members of this church that in the First Presidency we follow such a procedure. Even the President of the Church, who is prophet, seer, and revelator, and whose right and responsibility it is to make judgment and direct the course of the Church, invariably consults with his counselors to determine their feelings. If there is a lack of unity, there follows an absence of action. Two counselors, working with a president, preserve a wonderful system of checks and balances. They become a safeguard that is seldom, if ever, in error and affords great strength of leadership.

A friend

A counselor is a friend. Presidencies should do more than counsel together. Occasionally, but not to excess, they and their spouses should socialize together. They should be good friends, trusted friends, in a very real sense. The counselors should be concerned for the health and well-being of their president. He should feel free to discuss with them his personal problems, if he has any, with the full assurance that they will hold in the strictest confidence all that is told them.

A judge

A counselor is a judge. He is a lesser judge than the president, but he is nonetheless a judge.

In times of disciplinary councils, the three brethren of the bishopric, or the three brethren of the stake presidency, or the three brethren of the presidency of the Church, sit together, discuss matters together, pray together, in the process of reaching a decision. I wish to assure you, my brethren, that I think there is never a judgment rendered until after prayer has been had. Action against a member is too serious a matter to result from the judgment of men alone, and particularly of one man alone. There must be the guidance of the Spirit, earnestly sought for and then followed, if there is to be justice.

A proxy

In some circumstances, *a counselor may serve as a proxy for his president.* The power of proxy must be granted by the president, and it must never be abused by the counselor. The work must go forward notwithstanding absences of the president for reasons of illness, employment, or other factors beyond his control. In these circumstances, and in the interest of the work, the president should give his counselors authority to act with full confidence, he having

trained them as they have served together as a bishopric or presidency.

It may not be easy to be a counselor. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., who, as a counselor, had responsibility for the operation of the Church while President Heber J. Grant was ill, said to me on one occasion, "It is difficult to have responsibility without authority."

He was saying, in effect, that he had to move forward in handling those duties which ordinarily devolve upon the President, but while doing so, he did not have the authority of the President.

Counselor to President Kimball

I came to understand that situation in a very real way. If I may share with you some personal feelings: During the time that President Kimball was ill, President Tanner's health failed and he passed away. President Romney was called as First Counselor, and I as Second Counselor to President Kimball. Then President Romney became ill, thus leaving to me an almost overwhelming burden of responsibility. I counseled frequently with my Brethren of the Twelve, and I cannot say enough of appreciation to them for their understanding and for the wisdom of their judgment. In matters where there was a well-established policy, we moved forward. But no new policy was announced or implemented, and no significant practice was altered without sitting down with President Kimball and laying the matter before him and receiving his full consent and full approval.

In such circumstances when I would go to visit him, I always took a secretary who kept a detailed record of the conversation. I can assure you, my beloved brethren, that I never knowingly moved ahead of my file leader, that I never had any desire to move out ahead of him in Church policy or instruction. I knew that he was the appointed prophet of the Lord in that day. Even though I, too, had been sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator, along with my Brethren of the Twelve, I knew

also that none of us was the President of the Church. I knew that the Lord prolonged the life of President Kimball for purposes known to the Lord, and I had perfect faith that this prolonging of life was for a reason under the wisdom of Him who has greater wisdom than any man.

Counselors to President Benson

In November 1985, President Kimball passed away, and President Ezra Taft Benson, then President of the Council of the Twelve, was unanimously sustained as the President of the Church and prophet, seer, and revelator. He chose his counselors, and I give you the assurance that we have worked together harmoniously and well, and it has been a great and wonderfully rewarding experience.

President Benson is now ninety-one years of age and does not have the strength or vitality he once possessed in abundance. Brother Monson and I, as his counselors, do as has been done before, and that is to move forward the work of the Church, while being very careful not to get ahead of the President nor to undertake any departure of any kind from long-established policy without his knowledge and full approval.

I am grateful for President Monson. We have known one another for a long time and have worked together in many responsibilities. We counsel together. We deliberate together. We pray together. We postpone action when we are not fully certain of our course and do not move forward until we have the blessing of our President and that assurance which comes from the Spirit of the Lord.

We pray for our President. We pray often and with great earnestness. We love him and know our proper relationship to him, as well as our responsibility to the entire church. We counsel with the Twelve and partake of their judgment, which is a greater resource than I am able to describe.

Presidency called by the Lord

Do not fear, brethren: there is a Presidency over this church. I hope it will not sound egotistical when I say that it has been put in place by the Lord. We are not here of our own choosing. We are grateful for your sustaining support. We know that you pray for us and want you to know that we pray for you. We hope that we are following the will of the Lord. We earnestly believe that we are. We hope that you feel that we are. We have no other desire than the desire to do His will concerning His kingdom and His people.

We serve by His sufferance, knowing that at any time He chooses to do so, He can easily remove us. We are answerable to Him in this life, and will be held accountable when we are called before Him to make our report. I hope that we shall not be found wanting. I hope that when that time comes, I may have the opportunity of standing before

my Beloved Savior to give an accounting of my stewardship, and that I may be able to do so without embarrassment, or apology, or excuse. I have so tried to conduct my life. I know that I am not a perfect man, that I have many weaknesses. But I can say that I have tried to do that which the Lord would have me do as His servant, and as the servant of every member of this church throughout the world, and most particularly as the servant of my beloved President, our prophet, seer, and revelator.

I serve as a counselor, just as so many of you present tonight do, you in your responsibility and I in mine. I pray, my beloved brethren, that we may be faithful and true in these holy callings, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Hosanna."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 7, 1990. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!" without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 160th semiannual con-

ference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, from the sessions of the conference due to recent surgery. He is viewing the sessions by television. We miss him deeply, and we express our love to him.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Richard G. Scott, Charles Didier, and Douglas J. Martin are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations that are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and