

The High Priests Quorum



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To be ordained a high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood is a great honor and responsibility because the example for those holding this office is the Savior Himself. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God. ... And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. ... Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (**Heb. 5:1, 4–6**). Just as the Savior did not take this honor unto Himself but was called of God, so are all high priests in the Lord's Church. Their responsibility is to pattern their lives after the Savior, to bear witness through their words and deeds of His gracious Atonement and the truth of His gospel.

A Brief History

Throughout the history of humankind whenever the gospel in its fulness has been on earth, the Lord has called high priests to preside over His work.

- Adam, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, and other righteous men were ordained high priests (see **Alma 13**; **D&C 84:6–17**; **D&C 107:41–53**).
- After Moses's time the Lord withdrew the Melchizedek Priesthood from the earth except among certain faithful men.
- Among the Book of Mormon peoples, the presiding spiritual authorities were high priests (see **Alma 8:23**; **Alma 30:20–23**).
- During His mortal ministry Jesus Christ was the presiding high priest on earth (see **Heb. 3:1**). And as the great high priest, the Savior made an eternal sacrifice and "obtained eternal redemption for us" (see **Heb. 9:11–12**). He continues to preside over His Church.

- In the dispensation of the fulness of times, the first ordination to the office of high priest occurred at a conference of the Church held in Kirtland, Ohio, in June 1831. At that time 23 men were ordained high priests.
- For a time high priests quorums were organized in each ward, and each had its own presidency. But in 1877, shortly before his death, President Brigham Young directed that stake presidents should have responsibility over these quorums.
- In 1956 stake presidents began serving as presidents of the high priests quorums in their respective stakes.
- In December 1975 the First Presidency clarified that ward high priests groups function as part of the stake high priests quorum, with the stake president serving as president of the quorum and his counselors in the stake presidency serving as counselors in the quorum. Ward high priests group leaders function under the direction of the stake president.

Duties of High Priests Quorums

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) said that “it is the duty of the High Priests’ quorum to teach the principles of government, of union, of advancement and of growth in the kingdom of God. They are indeed the fathers of the people at large. In our High Priests’ quorums are numbered the Presidents of Stakes and their Counselors, Bishops and Counselors, Patriarchs, and all that have been ordained to the office of High Priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood. ... They should be united with the quorum in such a way that they give it all the force that they can impart for good.”

Responsibilities of High Priests

“The rights and responsibilities of high priests are to preside and to hold all the authority of elders (see **D&C 107:10**). Brethren are ordained high priests when they are called to a stake presidency, high council, or bishopric or when otherwise determined by the stake president.”

High priests should be worthy of great trust. Those who are ordained to this office in the priesthood should be men of faith, honesty, and integrity. They should be dependable and devoted to the Church so they can be depended upon to stand up for the gospel under all circumstances.

One of the primary responsibilities of high priests is to serve as home teachers. As such they “represent the Lord, the bishop, and ... group leaders. They support and serve all members of the families they visit. They nurture the friendship and respect of these members, showing genuine concern and love for them. ... Home teachers are the Church’s first source of help to members. They consult with the head of the household about the family’s needs and the ways to be most helpful. They offer help when members are unemployed, ill, lonely, moving, or have other needs.”

President Joseph F. Smith taught that every high priest should “set an example before the old and young worthy of emulation, and ... place himself in a position to be a teacher of righteousness, not only by precept but more particularly by example—giving to the younger ones the benefit of experience of age, and thus becoming individually a power in the midst of the community in which [he] dwells. ... Those holding this office are, as a rule, men of advanced years, and varied experience. ... Their experience ... is the ripened fruit of years of labor in the Church, and they should exercise that wisdom for the benefit of all with whom they are associated.”

The Role of High Priests in Relation to Temple and Family History Work

Group leaders and quorum members set an example in doing temple and family history work, including regularly attending the temple where circumstances allow. They help members prepare to receive their own temple ordinances. They also encourage members to identify their kindred dead and provide temple ordinances for them. Elders quorum presidents and high priests “group leaders should ensure that the doctrines, principles, and blessings relating to redeeming the dead are taught regularly in priesthood meeting and home teaching visits. They also encourage members to teach their children the importance of the temple. ... Under the bishopric’s direction, the high priests group leader coordinates temple and family history work in the ward.”

High priests are men who are mature in the gospel and are capable of presiding. They set an example for brethren who are less experienced, especially for members of the Aaronic Priesthood. They, along with other priesthood holders, are “to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church” (**D&C 20:42**). High priests are a great stabilizing force in each ward, branch, district, and stake, assisting in the mission of the Church, which includes preaching the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead. Above all, they are patriarchs in their homes and families, setting an example and establishing a pattern of righteousness for generations that follow.

Gospel topics: family history, leadership, priesthood, temple work