

Counseling with Our Councils

Key Quotes and Ideas for Your Role as a Campus Leader

(Reference: M. Russell Ballard, Counseling with Our Councils, © 1997, Published by Deseret Book, SLC, Utah)

See also: M. Russell Ballard, "Strength in Council," Ensign Magazine, NOV 1993, p. 76

See also: M. Russell Ballard, "Counseling with Our Councils," Ensign Magazine, MAY 1994, p. 24

Key Quotes:

If we are to succeed in leading ... **we must counsel together and help each other.** (p. viii) (emphasis added)

God has inspired the creation of a council system that is intended **to harness the insight and experience of all** who have been called to serve in key leadership positions... (p. 2) (emphasis added)

Under the direction of the priesthood [or, in the case of a business organization, the department leader] and the influence of the Holy Spirit **these councils should feature free and open discussion** and clear, concise communication. (p. 10) (emphasis added)

They [council meetings] provide an opportunity ... to come together **in a spirit of loving cooperation...** (p. 10) (emphasis added)

Our individual responsibilities are great, but just as important is the responsibility ... **to come together in a united effort** to bless the lives of our family members and all of our eternal brothers and sisters. (p. 10) (emphasis added)

It has never been God's intention that His children stand alone in important decisions and responsibilities. (p. 11)

... full consideration should be given to the views and recommendations **of all council members**, both the brethren and the sisters. Such an approach will result in wiser decisions and will generate greater commitment as these decisions are carried out. (p. 14) (emphasis added)

When ... leaders allow [people] to **become part of a problem-solving team**, wonderful things begin to happen. (p. 14) (emphasis added)

Since 1985 I have served as a member of a council composed of twelve men. We come from different backgrounds, and we bring to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles a diverse assortment of experiences in the Church and in the world. Be assured that in our meetings we don't just sit around and wait for the President of our Quorum to tell us what to do. **We council with each other, and we listen to each other with profound respect for the diverse abilities our Brethren bring to the Quorum. We discuss a wide variety of issues, from Church administration to world events, and we do so frankly and openly. Sometimes issues are discussed for weeks, months, and occasionally even years before a decision is made. We don't always agree during the initial course of our discussions. Once a decision is made, however, we are always united.** (p. 18-19) (emphasis added)

The council is not a democratic forum. There are no veto overrides, and there is no majority rule. As necessary as council input is ... it never supersedes the direction of the Holy Spirit as it manifests itself through revelation to those who hold priesthood keys [or, in the case of a business organization, the input never supersedes the direction of the department leader(s)]. (p.19) (emphasis added)

Effective Leadership (nine principles):

1. An effective leader has a sense of vision

The leader needs to know *where we want to go* and *what we want to have happen*. (p. 23)

2. An effective leader encourages free expression

Councils should always allow time for **discussion and consideration of differing points of view**. (p. 24)
(emphasis added)

3. An effective leader respects the gift of agency

Another important principle we observe in the Grand Council ... is that all of the council members had the precious gift of agency. **This was not an exercise in compulsion, nor was it a study in domination**. (p. 25)
(emphasis added)

4. An effective leader gives clear, precise instructions

The Creation story offers important lessons ... First, notice how Heavenly Father issued clear, precise instructions. **He sent His chosen representatives out with clearly defined expectations and then let them decide how best to accomplish the details**. (p. 26) (emphasis added)

5. An effective leader works step by step

The second leadership lesson of the Creation ... has to do with the breadth and the pace of the instructions God issued.... Although He had the full vision of what He wanted to have happen, He took His council through the process **one step at a time, providing plenty of opportunity for reporting, counsel, and follow-up instruction along the way**. (p. 27) (emphasis added)

6. An effective leader delegates

The third lesson that [we] can learn from the Creation council is that Heavenly Father didn't do all of the work Himself ... **he chose to delegate responsibilities, always asking for a follow-up report** to make sure that the work had been done correctly. (p. 29) (emphasis added)

7. An effective leader sets an example of hard work

Throughout His ministry Jesus taught His followers the importance of *doing*. (p. 32)

8. An effective leader teaches by precept and example

That Jesus is committed to the council concept cannot be questioned. Twice in ancient times He personally organized His Church on the earth, and both times He established it with governing councils. In both the Holy Land of the New Testament and the promised land of the Book of Mormon, **He spent considerable time teaching and instructing and training His councils and council leaders...** (p. 33)
(emphasis added)

9. An effective leader serves with love

How critical it is that all who serve together in God's kingdom do so from a foundation of love: love for the Lord, love for the work, and love for each other. (p. 35)

"As members participate in councils, they learn about larger organizational issues. They see leadership in action, make decisions, and coordinate across subunit boundaries." (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 3:1141-1142)

Ideas for Effective Council Member Participation:

Unanimity in Council

- **We seek consensus** in all that we do. (p. 60) (emphasis added)
- There have been times when an issue has remained under consideration for a period of time. (p. 60)
- **Support and sustain the [final] decision of the council leader.** (p. 60) (emphasis added)
- **Unanimity should always be sought through free and open discussion.** (p. 63) (emphasis added)

Confidentiality in Council

- It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of keeping council proceedings confidential. (p. 64)
- **Each council member is obligated to keep confidential the matters he or she discusses and hears.** (p. 64) (emphasis added)
- Breaches can have enormously destructive repercussions. (p. 65)
- There is never any reason for council members to share with others (including their spouses) details of the business of the council, particularly with regard to individual needs or differences of opinion. **If we are to bless people's lives and avoid hurting them, we simply must learn to keep confidential things confidential.** (p. 65) (emphasis added)

The Value of Listening in Council

- While it is true that final decisions and directions rest with the person who has been called to preside, there is little reason to have council members with unique insights, experiences, and abilities if you're not going to pay attention to what they have to say. (p. 65)
- Let your council members know that you ... **expect them to express themselves.** (p. 65) (emphasis added)
- One who is called to serve on a Church council should remember that his or her participation on the council is a privilege. And with that privilege comes responsibility – responsibility to work within the parameters of the organization, **to be prepared, to share, to advocate vigorously the position he or she believes to be right. But just as important is the responsibility to support and sustain the final decision of the council leader.** (p. 66) (emphasis added)

Council Leadership

- The ideal model is straightforward and simple: call good people to serve with you, listen carefully to their counsel and consider their input, and then listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit as it leads you to make good decisions. **Functioning successfully as a council doesn't mean making group decisions.** It simply means the council leader draws from the various abilities, insights, experiences, and inspiration of council members to help make good decisions under the influence of the Spirit. **While we seek unanimity, the final decision is always up to the council leader.** (p. 68) (emphasis added)
- It is important that all council members understand the significant and very distinct role of the council leader **and learn not to be offended when the decision is different from the course they would have chosen.** Decision making isn't the primary responsibility of counselors. **Counselors are called to do just that – to provide counsel – as well as to assist, strengthen, and support. Their role is to participate – actively and candidly – in the decision-making process, to support and sustain all council decisions, and to execute their implementation through their respective organizations.** (p. 70) (emphasis added)