

Priesthood councils guide Family History work

The Priesthood department has a structure to support ward and full time missionaries. It is found in the assignments in the Handbooks. It seems that the structure of assignments in the Handbooks designed to support Family History Consultants in their callings is not as carefully followed.

The following example teaches a principle about Priesthood leadership. After Nephi had broken his bow, in 1 Nephi 16:23 the scripture states, "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make out of wood a bow, and out of a straight stick, an arrow; wherefore, I did arm myself with a bow and an arrow, with a sling and with stones. And I said unto my father: Whither shall I go to obtain food?" Missionaries were taught that instead of this experienced hunter, Nephi, going out again to hunt, he asked direction from his father. Lehi had to humble himself to use the Liahona.

Is it appropriate locally in a stake for consultants and family history enthusiasts, to organize and hold workshops designed to strengthen consultants with skills that they will use to nourish the souls in our stakes? First impression would be to say "yes" but it will not work. To really succeed they must have the guidance from Priesthood leaders as they specifically plan and organize the details together.

Consultants must counsel with Priesthood leaders as often as home teachers do. For this work to go forward consultants must be guided by the spirit during Priesthood interviews.

The real work succeeds when consultants work monthly with their Priesthood leaders who in turn come from the Ward Council meeting with assignments and who invite a regular "Return and Report" discussion of ways to serve the ward family in this important work.

A priesthood High Priest Group Leader's assignment in the manuals is to discuss the needs and the service being rendered by Family History Consultants on a monthly basis. The main focus of the monthly meeting between the HPGL and the consultants should be structured by the ward council.

Specifically, in section 5.4.2 of *Church Handbook 2 - Administering the Church* and in the *Leader's Guide to Temple and Family History Work - To Turn the Hearts*, the Ward Council is assigned to:

- a) **Call** as many family history consultants to labor in the ward as there are of full-time and ward missionaries.
- b) **Request** training for ward consultants to assure that there are trained specialists who will help members understand and adhere to established policies for identifying and submitting the names of individuals for temple ordinances.
- c) **Teach** the members to promote family history with friends and neighbors.
- d) **Assign** home and visiting teachers to help less active members turn their hearts to their deceased relatives so they can feel the Spirit of Temple work. (Follow up on this key function in every meeting.)
- e) Prayerfully **identify** members to attend temple preparation seminars.
- f) Prayerfully **identify** members to attend family history classes. **Assign** teachers to instruct that members are to identify the first five generations of the family's ancestors and their descendants and process their names for temple ordinances. **Teach** members how to continue in researching and identifying family members.
- g) **Recommend** calendar items for family history workshops, ward baptism and sealing excursions.
- h) **Coordinate** and help youth develop leadership and technical skills in all aspects of Temple and Family History work especially Indexing.
- i) **Provide member assignments** for Family History consultants to provide one-on-one help and *ask* the HPGL to return and report on the success of those assignments.
- j) **Recommend** ways members can help others to build their family trees.
- k) **Coordinate** help for members who have reserved names for ordinances.

The Key to Family History success in the ward involves having Consultants help each family to maintain the part of their Book of Remembrance which accurately identifies descendants of ancestral family members and the performing of temple ordinances for them.

The priesthood *Leader's Guide to Temple and Family History Work - To Turn the Hearts*, page 7, states that a High Councilor (or councilors) are **assigned** to (1) *instruct* High Priest Group Leader in their family history responsibilities and ensures that the stake, wards, and high priest groups and elders quorums are organized to do temple and family history work, (2) *coordinate* FamilySearch Indexing, (3) **make assignments** to wards, through high priest group leaders, to provide family history consultants to staff family history centers in the stake. The high councilor *coordinates* through bishoprics and high priest group leaders to assign enough family history consultants to staff family history centers in the stake (page 10).

The *Leader's Guide* states, as a start, that each family in the Church should be taught to accurately identify their family members within the first five generations of their family, and then request and perform temple ordinances for them as needed, where possible. Leaders must continually teach the doctrine of turning our hearts to our fathers that the members will continue this work once they start.

Each ward should have at least two Family History consultants who are trained and able to go into the homes of members and help them accurately identify all deceased descendants of the first five generations of their family ancestors. These consultants can be **assigned** by the HPGL to labor with specific families to do this task, after he has been **assigned** to do so by the Ward Council.

Although we may give a motivational talk to the saints in a general meeting, the real Key to successfully having members do their family history **assignment** from the Lord is to have Family History Consultants help each family to maintain the part of their Book of Remembrance which stresses accurately identifying and performing ordinances for descendant family members.

Each priesthood leader and family history consultant should be registered at <https://www.lds.org/callings/temple-and-family-history?lang=eng> that they might be more fully trained in fulfilling their assignment regarding family history work. The first step to temple work is family history records which accurately identify our ancestors and their descendants.

* * * * *

The Key to doing individual family history involves time management skills and knowing how to use a "To Do" list. When we stop our labor for whatever reason, the key to organizing our efforts, is to make a note to our self on a "To Do" list which tells what we were last working on. It is the method or Key to keeping efforts focused. Referring to a "To Do" list lets me pick up where I last left off. Having a "To Do" list keeps me from having to start over again and again, every time I want to work on my family history records. The "To Do" list is the key to staying organized.

Unless we schedule a date to go to the temple monthly, we often do not make it there. Similarly, unless we schedule a weekly time to work on our family history that will not happen either. And if we lack the knowledge how to pick up where we left off we will easily become overwhelmed and give up.

To touch the hearts of our members we need to help them incorporate doing an overwhelming task into what seems to them to be an overwhelming season in their busy lives. How do we present Family History work as a simple process which they can manage in the same way that they can manage regularly praying or studying the scriptures or reading the Ensign magazine?

How can we teach the members to set up the chores in their lives so that their homes are houses of order? They need to manage the stress levels in their lives to keep themselves from becoming overloaded (distressed). They need to use the principle that is designed into the recent Church Handbook of Instruction - that of using the Family Council system, which follows the pattern of the Ward Council system, the Stake Council system, or the other management systems of the Church.

Teach member to have routines in their family system. Teach members to counsel together in their families that they can determine how to involve all family members in working together to create and maintain a family "Book of Remembrance" which contains the stories of their ancestors and the descendants of those ancestors. Creating such a book requires a myriad of steps; that is where the "To Do" list comes in. The two things we must become better at are teaching time management and "To Do" task management skills.

If we are going to really help increase the number of our members remaining engaged in doing this work after they complete six weeks of family history lessons, we need to ask ourselves what we can do to help the members change their lifestyle so they are just as obedient to their commitment of being "Saviors on Mount Zion" as they are to following the admonition "Every Member a Missionary" or having regular prayer and scriptures study or having a weekly family home evening or to doing home or visiting teaching.