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For the Power Is in Them
Leading through Shared Leadership

*I*f you could go back in time to Nauvoo to study the leadership of the Prophet Joseph, would you see what you expect to see? If you could walk those dusty streets and observe the Prophet at work, you would not see him moving among the people by himself, charismatically ministering to them alone, a retinue of meek assistants trailing behind him. Rather, you would see him most of the time with his brother Hyrum, ministering and teaching in tandem to the people. In fact, the Saints constantly saw them joined in their leadership and ministry. Mary Ann Stearns Winters wrote, “I rejoice in my acquaintance with the Prophet Joseph, and his brother Hyrum also, for one is not complete without the other—they were nearly always together, and are inseparably connected in mind—Joseph and Hyrum—names forever dear to the faithful.”¹

Whenever historians and social scientists have tried to analyze the great social movements over the past century, they have usually focused on the primary leaders of those movements. After reviewing the body of research on leadership from the late nineteenth century through 1990, Bernard Bass observed: “For many commentators, history is shaped by the leadership of great men. Without Moses, the Jews would have remained in Egypt. Without Winston Churchill, the British would have given up in 1940. . . . To William James, the mutations of society were due to great men, who initiated movement and prevented others from leading society in another direction. The history of the world, according to James, is the history of Great Men.”²

Most leadership theories focus on understanding the behavior of leaders rather than the behavior of followers,³ and Latter-day Saint historians and social scientists have generally followed this trend. For example, numerous biographies and studies have been written on the life of Joseph Smith by both LDS and non-LDS scholars, while only two biographies have been published on the life of Hyrum Smith. It is natural to focus primarily on important leaders in history, but this approach limits our ability to see events “as they were” (D&C 93:24), in all their complexity.

Some social scientists now see leadership not so much as powerful *individuals* but as *systems* with many roles to be fulfilled. While one person usually has primary responsibility over a group, he or she is not the sole leader of that group. In effective organizations, leadership is distributed systematically among many people.⁴ One individual cannot fulfill all the necessary leadership roles simultaneously; as a result, everyone in a family, a ward, a stake, or company takes on leadership roles at various times. As noted sociologist Mary P. Follett observed, “Leadership is sometimes in one place and sometimes in another.”⁵ President Gordon B. Hinckley said it this way:

Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. . . . You have as great an opportunity for satisfaction in the performance of your duty as I do in mine. The progress of this work will be determined by our joint efforts. Whatever your calling, it is as fraught with the same kind of opportunity to accomplish good as is mine. What is really important is that this is the work of the Master. Our work is to go about doing good as did He.⁶

Joseph Smith, great as he was, could not—and did not—lead the Church on his own. Elder M. Russell Ballard has observed, “It is an error to put Joseph as a stand alone figure. In Joseph’s greatest hour of need, Hyrum was there.”⁷ Like all successful leaders, Joseph shared leadership within a system where others played many different leadership roles—important leadership roles that he could not perform alone. In this chapter, we will explore how the Prophet Joseph shared leadership with his brother Hyrum, and learn from them how to share leadership with others more effectively.

Leadership Roles

Scholars categorize leadership roles in different ways. Henry Mintzberg’s model is one of the best known. After years of observing leaders at work, he identified ten essential roles successful leaders must fulfill (see fig. 1):⁸

One person does not, and indeed cannot, play all of these roles at the same time in many places. Instead, group members step up individually to fulfill the roles of, say, *conflict resolver* or *motivator*, while the leader is busy with other roles. So it was for Joseph and Hyrum. At times, Joseph—while maintaining his official role as President of the Church—needed Hyrum to take over important leadership roles.

Fig. 1. Leadership Roles and Their Definitions (Mintzberg, 1973)

<p>Figurehead</p> <p>Symbolic head of the organization; represents the organization at public functions.</p>	<p>Spokesperson</p> <p>Transmits information to outsiders regarding the organization.</p>
<p>Motivator</p> <p>Motivates, develops, instructs, and trains members.</p>	<p>Entrepreneur</p> <p>Looks for opportunities; creates and supervises new initiatives.</p>
<p>Liaison</p> <p>Acts as go-between for the organization and external groups.</p>	<p>Disturbance Handler</p> <p>Responsible for corrective action when unexpected problems and conflict occur</p>
<p>Monitor</p> <p>Seeks and receives information to better understand the organization and its environment.</p>	<p>Resource Allocator</p> <p>Distributes resources within the organization; makes and approves significant decisions.</p>
<p>Disseminator</p> <p>Transmits important information to members of the organization.</p>	<p>Negotiator</p> <p>Represents the organization during major negotiations with outsiders.</p>

Between October 29, 1839, and March 4, 1840, Joseph Smith made his famous trip to Washington DC to seek redress from President Martin Van Buren for the persecutions that the Saints had suffered in Missouri. A story told less often is that during that trip Hyrum was charged with presiding over the city of Nauvoo, the Church in Nauvoo, and the other LDS settlements in the region. For a little over four months, Hyrum essentially led the Church on a day-to-day basis.⁹

During Joseph’s absence, Hyrum oversaw the ongoing construction work in Nauvoo, presided and preached in

numerous Church meetings, published articles in the *Times and Seasons*, organized a stake in an outlying settlement, counseled local and distant Church leaders, supervised the missionary work, handled all official Church correspondence, raised funds, and served on a committee to work with the state legislature on Nauvoo's behalf.¹⁰

Thus both Joseph and Hyrum simultaneously performed different yet critical leadership roles for the Church. During his mission to Washington, Joseph fulfilled the leadership roles of *figurehead*, *liaison*, *monitor*, *spokesperson*, and *negotiator*, while Hyrum performed the leadership roles of *motivator*, *resource allocator*, *entrepreneur*, *disturbance handler*, and *disseminator*. When Joseph returned to Nauvoo in March of 1840, Hyrum's leadership roles changed somewhat, given that the Prophet had returned.

Likewise, in a family or a ward, different individuals move to the forefront in leadership roles at different times, and when the need for that role diminishes, someone else steps up in a new role. In reality, these "leadership role shifts" occur daily. For example, one child in a family might have a gift for resolving conflicts; the mother might be adept at seeing growth opportunities for the family and suggesting new initiatives and goals; the father and mother might share the *resource allocator* role; and the eldest son might be good at helping younger siblings with Scouting goals or computer skills. Likely, such a family isn't even aware that this multiple leadership system is in place.

The fact that all perform leadership roles in any organization might not seem an earthshaking insight; however, as long as we look to a "great man" or "great woman" for leadership, we underestimate the need for our own leadership in the family or the ward, and we thus give up our responsibility to lead out vigorously when necessary. After all, if Dad or Mom or the bishop is "the leader," then all we have to do is wait around for

them to ask us to do something. If we feel we are just a speck of dust in the overall scheme of things, we tend to carry out our responsibilities with resignation and apathy. Mary P. Follett wrote:

Let me speak to you for a moment of something which seems to me of the utmost importance, but which has been far too little considered, and that is the part of the followers in the leadership situation. Their part is not merely to follow, they have a very active part to play and that is to keep the leader in control of a situation. Let us not think that we are either leaders or—nothing of much importance. . . . The members of a group are not so much following a leader as helping to keep him in control of a situation.¹¹

We sustain those called to preside—a father, a mother, a bishop—by fulfilling leadership roles of our own. We do not passively follow; we help the primary leader maintain control of the organization. “Control” often has a negative meaning nowadays, but Follett used the word to mean *to administer, advise, conduct, govern, guide, handle, instruct, lead, manage, pilot, regulate, steer, and supervise* a group in achieving its ultimate goals.¹²

When we deeply understand that, at any given moment, we are fulfilling a leadership role important to our family’s or ward’s progress, then we will have the right spiritual attitude to actually make a difference in the lives of others. The Lord revealed that we each play a part in the leadership system of the kingdom: “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves” (D&C 58:26–28).

When we begin to see each other as leaders rather than followers, as responsible guides rather than cogs in a wheel, we will deepen our respect and love for each other.

Although Joseph and Hyrum shared leadership roles between themselves and with others, there was order in this sharing. Just because someone wants to play a certain leadership role, that doesn't mean he should. What principles can we learn from the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum about the orderly sharing of leadership?

Principle 1: Preparing Leaders

During Joseph's mission to Washington, Hyrum celebrated his fortieth birthday. Before this birthday, Hyrum had fulfilled the following leadership roles in the Church:

- Counselor in the First Presidency
- One of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon
- Charter member of the Church
- Several brief missions
- Cochair of the Kirtland Temple Committee
- Leader in Zion's Camp expedition
- Member of a stake presidency
- Member of a stake high council
- Member of a bishopric
- Member of a branch presidency

Additionally, Hyrum had suffered mortal danger for the gospel's sake and had helped sustain Joseph in the trials of Liberty Jail. Joseph could trust Hyrum's loyalty and administrative experience, for Hyrum had been prepared in the crucible of virtually every one of the Restoration's key events. The Prophet could leave for Washington on his important mission secure in knowing that Nauvoo—and the Church—would be watched over with wisdom and maturity by his brother

Hyrum. Preparation is an important principle to consider before delegating significant leadership roles to people.

Principle 2: Sharing a Vision

Marriages, families, wards, companies—any organization, large or small, progresses more fruitfully when the group has a common vision, an ideal or meaningful goal that focuses all the group’s efforts.¹³ Shared leadership works best when all the members of the organization share within their hearts the same vision. In a sense, the vision itself becomes “the leader” as everyone in the group follows that invisible leader—the vision.¹⁴ “Loyalty to the invisible leader [the shared vision] gives the strongest possible bond of union, establishes a sympathy which is not a sentimental but a dynamic sympathy. Moreover, when both leader and followers are obeying the same demand [vision], you have instead of a passive, an active, self-willed obedience.”¹⁵

To share *leadership* successfully, all must have their own convictions of the *purpose* or *vision* they share, and the more people who share the vision, the stronger the vision. Hyrum Smith did not believe in the gospel just because Joseph was his brother. He possessed his own testimony and thus shared profoundly the vision the Prophet Joseph sought to achieve. In Hyrum’s own words:

I had been abused and thrust into a dungeon, and confined for months on account of my faith, and the ‘testimony of Jesus Christ.’ However, I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life.¹⁶

Hyrum “owned” the purpose of the Restoration as much as Joseph owned it. Both shared the common purpose and

vision of the Restoration to a profound depth. The degree of success in a family, ward, or any type of organization is usually proportional to the degree of shared vision among the members of the leadership system.

Principle 3: Staying on the Same Page

Fulfilling a leadership role does not mean acting independently of everyone else in the organization, nor does it mean making decisions according to one's whims, preferences, and inclinations. The result would be chaos. The Lord's house is a house of order. We must lead in harmony with other leaders and with gospel principles, not as "Lone Rangers" who do everything our own way, independently of what others think and feel.

While the Prophet was in Washington, Hyrum received a request from Parley P. Pratt, who was serving a mission in New York, to allow him to publish the Book of Mormon there to make more copies available for distribution on the East Coast. Hyrum replied to Parley that he understood his reasoning, but that the authorities of the Church would need to consider it together. Hyrum could have acted upon his own reasoning and wisdom and told Parley to go ahead, but he waited to counsel with the President of the Church on the course to take. Hyrum knew he could decide many matters in Joseph's absence according to principle and in view of his own experience, but some matters needed the attention of the entire First Presidency. Effective leadership means making sure everyone is "on the same page" when it comes to crucial decisions. (The importance of "counseling together" in Church councils is discussed more fully in chapter 10.)

Parting Thoughts

Elder M. Russell Ballard observed that Joseph came to depend upon Hyrum just as Moses depended upon Aaron.¹⁷ Moses did not lead the children of Israel alone, nor did Joseph

Smith lead the Church by himself. Members of the Church flocked to the Prophet’s Red Brick Store for counsel, blessings, conversation, and encouragement. The stories are legion of the wonderful service the Prophet gave to all who entered his store. About a block away from Joseph’s redbrick store stood Hyrum’s brick office, a less well-known but also central hub of activity in Nauvoo. It served as a courtroom, a meeting place for priesthood and city councils, and a sacred space for performing priesthood ordinances. Hyrum’s most recent biographer, Jeffrey S. O’Driscoll, wrote: “The office was busy because of Hyrum. People came to see him. If they went to his home instead of to his office, they were kindly welcomed whether they came to visit or receive patriarchal blessings, instruction, or priesthood ordinances. Though Hyrum welcomed visitors into his home, sometimes there was hardly room to receive them.”¹⁸

As we reenvision the leadership of the Prophet Joseph—as leadership shared with his brother Hyrum in a constant, intimate, and dynamic way—let us learn too to share leadership when appropriate and to improve in the leadership roles we perform each day. Whenever we encourage a spouse, calm an argument between our children, or teach a Sunday School class, we are performing a leadership role that no one else can perform in just that place and time. In each moment, we play the role of Aaron to the President of the Church, to the bishop, to a beloved spouse—we are cocreators of good with the Savior himself—for we are the only ones there to do what Jesus Christ would do.

Let us realize that just as Joseph had his store where he ministered to the Saints and Hyrum had his office where he ministered to the Saints, we too have a store—we too have an office—where we minister to the Saints. Our store, our office is our home, our calling, our workplace—we have a ministry just as Joseph and Hyrum did. Let us all come to learn deeply that

we too play irreplaceable, indispensable leadership roles in the Lord's system of leadership for his kingdom.

Notes

1. Jeffrey S. O'Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith: A Life of Integrity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 225.
2. Bernard M. Bass, *Bass and Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research and Managerial Applications*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1990), 37.
3. Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006), 18.
4. These concepts are summarized in Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, eds., *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003).
5. Mary Parker Follett, "The Essentials of Leadership," in L. Urwick, ed., *Freedom and Coordination: Lectures in Business Organisation by Mary Parker Follett* (London: Management Publications Trust, 1949), 51.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Is the Work of the Master," *Ensign*, May 1995, 69.
7. Heidi S. Swinton, *American Prophet: The Story of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1999), 117.
8. Henry Mintzberg, *The Nature of Managerial Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
9. O'Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith*, 218.
10. O'Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith*, 218–25.
11. Follett, "The Essentials of Leadership," 54–55.
12. *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, s.v. "control," <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/control>.
13. Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 266.
14. Follett, "The Essentials of Leadership," 56.
15. Follett, "The Essentials of Leadership," 56.
16. *Times and Seasons*, August 1, 1844, 596–97.
17. M. Russell Ballard, "Brothers Bound by Love and Faith," *Ensign*, September 1994, 64.
18. O'Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith*, 283.