



Gospel Teaching and Learning

*A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders
in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion*

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in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion*

Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Comments and corrections are appreciated. Please send them, including errors, to:

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Printed in the United States of America

English approval: 12/11

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Preface

“When we begin to analyze ourselves and look to improve ourselves as teachers, what better model could we find? What finer study could we undertake than to analyze our ideas and goals and methods and compare them with those of Jesus Christ?” (Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. [1991], 22).

Teaching in the Savior’s Way

Reflect for a moment on what you know about the Savior. Can you see Him in your mind—with His disciples gathered around Him? Can you see Him teaching the multitudes beside the Sea of Galilee or speaking personally to the woman at the well? What do you notice about His way of teaching and leading? How did He help others learn, grow spiritually, and become converted to His gospel?

He loved them, prayed for them, and continually served them. He found opportunities to be with them and to express His love. He knew their interests, hopes, and desires and what was happening in their lives.

He knew who they were and who they could become. He found unique ways to help them learn and grow—ways meant just for them. When they struggled, He did not give up on them but continued to love them and minister to them.

He prepared Himself to teach by spending time alone in prayer and fasting. In daily, private moments, He sought His Heavenly Father’s guidance.

He used the scriptures to teach and testify about His mission. He taught people to think about scriptures for themselves and use them to find answers to their own questions. Their hearts burned within them as He taught the word of God with power and authority, and they knew for themselves that the scriptures are true.

He shared simple stories, parables, and real-life examples that made sense to them. He helped them discover gospel lessons in their own experiences and in the world around them. He spoke of fishing, of childbirth, of working in the fields. To teach about watching over each other, He told stories about rescuing lost sheep. To teach His disciples to trust Heavenly Father’s tender care, He urged them to “consider the lilies of the field.”

He asked questions that caused them to think and feel deeply. He was sincerely interested in their answers and rejoiced in their expressions of faith. He gave them opportunities to ask their own questions and share their own insights, and He responded to their questions and listened to their experiences. Because of His love, they felt safe sharing their thoughts and personal feelings.



He invited them to testify, and as they did, the Spirit touched their hearts. "Whom say ye that I am?" He asked. As Peter responded, his testimony was strengthened: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

He trusted them, prepared them, and gave them important responsibilities to teach, bless, and serve others. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," He charged them. His purpose was to help them become converted through their service to others.

He invited them to act in faith and live the truths He taught. In all His teaching, He focused on helping His followers live the gospel with all their hearts. To accomplish this, He found opportunities for them to learn through powerful experiences. When He appeared to the Nephites, He invited them to come to Him one by one, that they might see, feel, and know Him for themselves. When

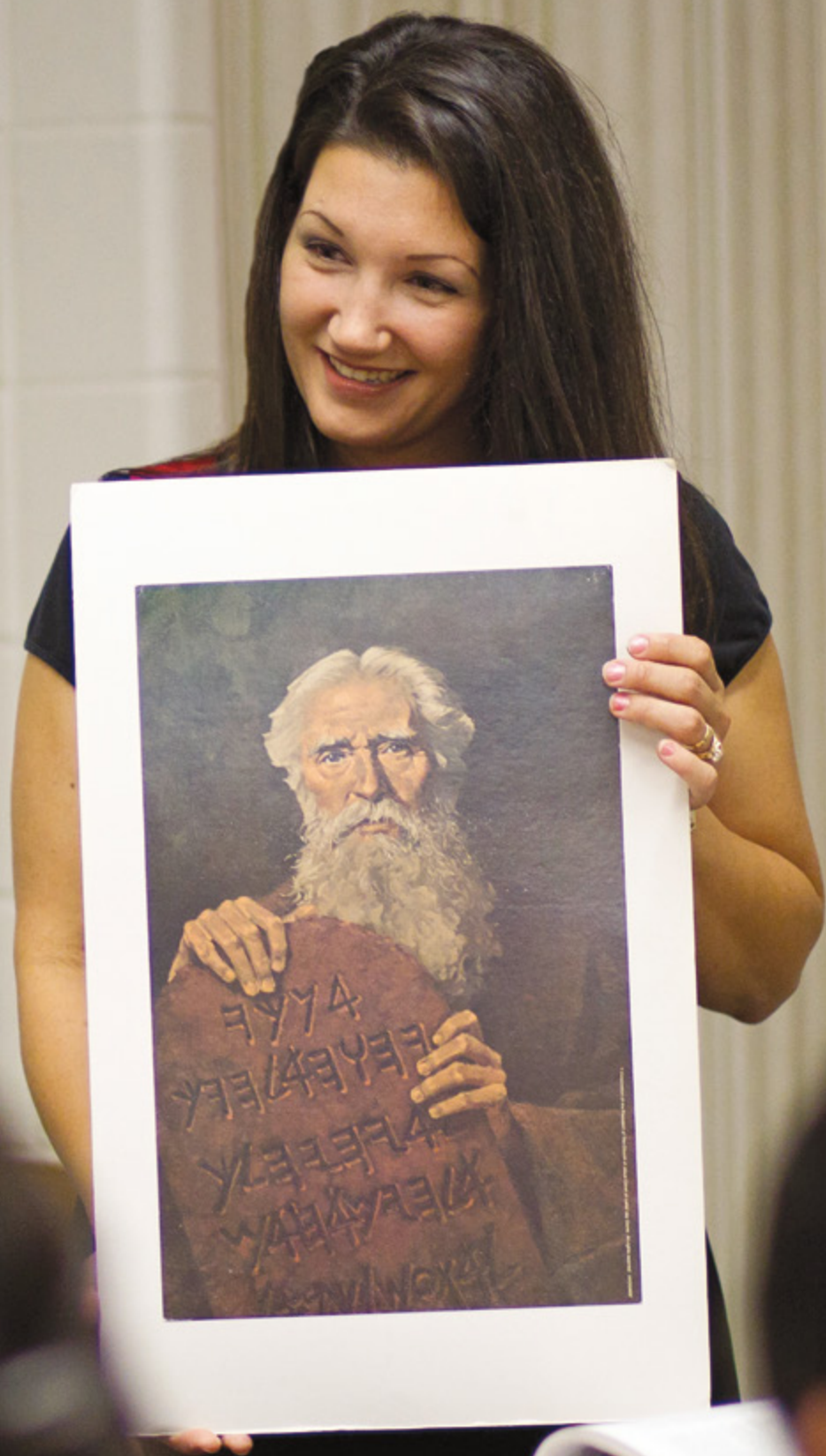


He sensed that they did not fully understand His message, He invited them to go home and prepare themselves to come back and learn more.

In every setting, He was their example and mentor. He taught them to pray by praying with them. He taught them to love and serve by the way He loved and served them. He taught them how to teach His gospel by the way He taught it.

Clearly, the Savior's way of teaching is different from the world's way.

This, then, is your sacred calling—to teach as the Savior taught. As you do, the youth will give place in their hearts for the seed of the gospel to be planted, to swell, and to grow. This will lead to conversion—the ultimate goal of your teaching. As you help youth become converted, you help them prepare to follow the Savior throughout their lives—to serve missions, receive temple ordinances, raise righteous families, and build God's kingdom in all the world.



Introduction

The Church Educational System

The Church Educational System (CES) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operates under the direction of the Board of Education and the Boards of Trustees of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members of the First Presidency, selected members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and other General Authorities and general officers of the Church are members of the Board of Education.

Individual entities within the Church Educational System include Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University–Idaho, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, and LDS Business College.

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) provides weekday religious education for youth and young adults. Seminaries and Institutes of Religion also supervises elementary and secondary schools in some areas outside the United States.

In Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, our task is not just education—it is religious education. Religious education has eternal implications and requires the influence of the Spirit of the Lord. Speaking to seminary and institute teachers, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught: “You teachers have a great mission. As teachers you stand upon the highest peak in education, for what teaching can compare in priceless value and in far-reaching effect with that which deals with man as he was in the eternity of yesterday, as he is in the mortality of today, and as he will be in the forever of tomorrow” (*The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. [1994], 9).

Thousands of seminary and institute teachers and leaders throughout the world are helping the youth and young adults of the Church learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and live according to its principles.

To assist teachers in their efforts, this *Gospel Teaching and Learning* handbook has been provided. It is a resource book. Teachers should be familiar with its contents and refer to it again and again, focusing on those areas that would be of greatest help to them. As teachers study this handbook and seek direction from the Lord, He will inspire them in their preparation, strengthen their relationships with students, magnify their teaching, and bless them with the Spirit to more fully accomplish His work.

The Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

Our purpose is to help youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.

To achieve our purpose:

Live

We live the gospel of Jesus Christ and strive for the companionship of the Spirit. Our conduct and relationships are exemplary in the home, in the classroom, and in the community. We continually seek to improve our performance, knowledge, attitude, and character.

Teach

We teach students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets. These doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to understanding and edification. We help students fulfill their role in the learning process and prepare them to teach the gospel to others.

Administer

We administer our programs and resources appropriately. Our efforts assist parents in their responsibility to strengthen their families. We work closely with priesthood leaders as we invite students to participate and as we provide a spiritual environment where students can associate with one another and learn together.

The Objective

Teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ have been given a sacred trust. Their purpose goes beyond simply teaching lessons. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, “A gospel teacher will never be satisfied with just delivering a message or preaching a sermon. A superior gospel teacher wants to assist in the Lord’s work to bring eternal life to His children” (“Gospel Teaching,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 80).

The Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion provides clear direction to teachers and leaders regarding their efforts to assist in the Lord’s work.

Our Purpose [1.1]

Our purpose is to help youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.

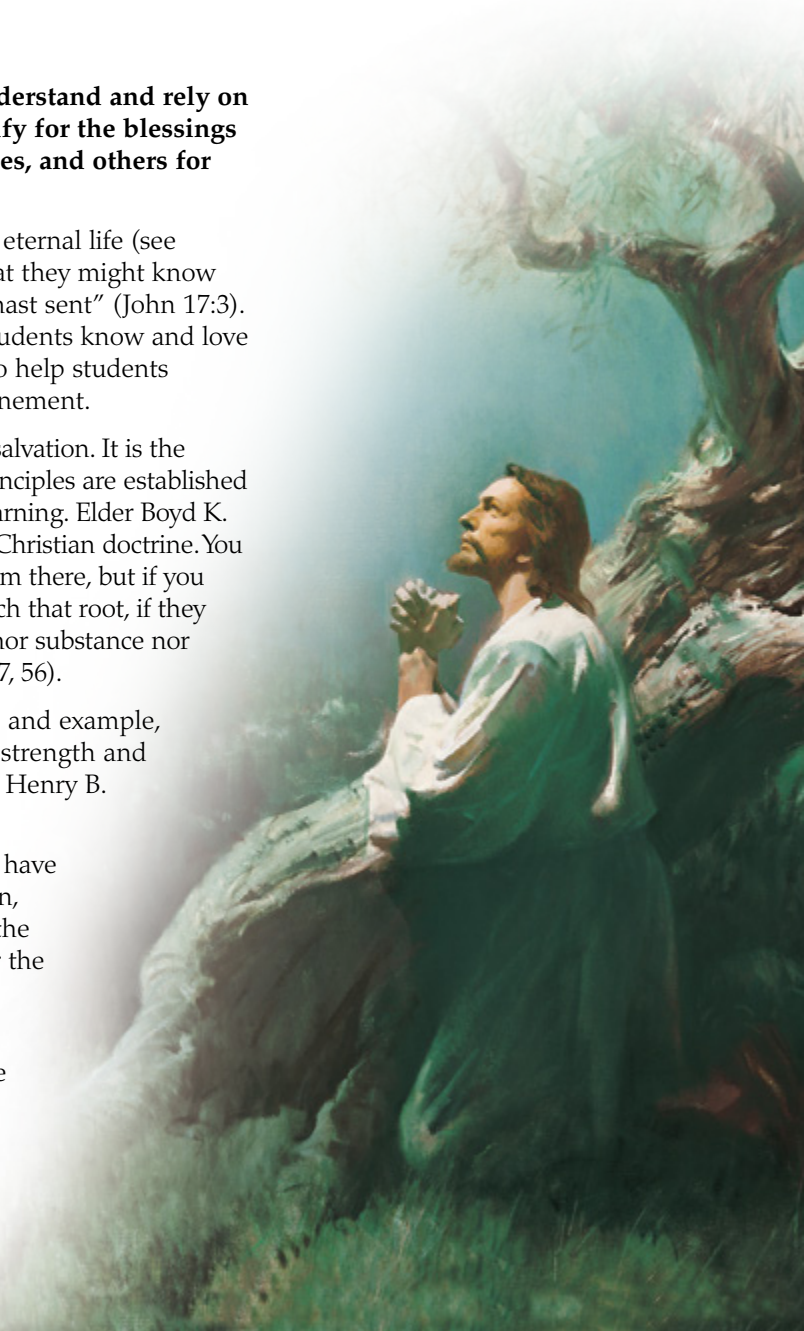
Heavenly Father desires that each of His children gain eternal life (see Moses 1:39). The Savior taught: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Therefore, the focus of religious education is to help students know and love their Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to help students understand and rely on the Savior’s teachings and Atonement.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is central to the plan of salvation. It is the fundamental truth upon which gospel doctrines and principles are established and should be at the heart of all gospel teaching and learning. Elder Boyd K. Packer testified that the Atonement “is the very root of Christian doctrine. You may know much about the gospel as it branches out from there, but if you only know the branches and those branches do not touch that root, if they have been cut free from that truth, there will be no life nor substance nor redemption in them” (“The Mediator,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 56).

As students learn of Jesus Christ, follow His teachings and example, and apply His Atonement in their lives, they can gain strength and experience forgiveness, healing, and conversion. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught:

“We must raise our sights. We must keep the goals we have always had: enrollment, regular attendance, graduation, knowledge of the scriptures, the experience of feeling the Holy Ghost confirm truth. In addition, we must aim for the mission field and the temple. But students need more during the time they are our students. . . .

“The pure gospel of Jesus Christ must go down into the hearts of students by the power of the Holy Ghost. . . .



"As we teach our young people to love the Savior Jesus Christ, they will become true disciples of the Master. This process will prepare them to become loyal, loving husbands and fathers, wives and mothers—leaders of eternal families. The temples will become a natural and important part of their lives. They will become missionaries, serving the Lord on missions as young adults and later as mature couples. . . . As we strengthen our youth by pointing them to Christ, we also strengthen families and the Church."



(Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "A Teacher of God's Children" [an evening with President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Jan. 28, 2011], 3)

Our aim must be for them to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us" ("We Must Raise Our Sights" [CES conference on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 14, 2001], 2).

True conversion leads to the highest blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are made possible through the ordinances of the temple. As students faithfully make and keep temple covenants, they will qualify for those blessings that include exaltation and eternal families. They will experience added spiritual strength, greater peace, and additional personal revelation.

Students who center their lives on the Savior and the temple can obtain greater protection against the enticements and deceptions of the world and be better prepared to accomplish all that Father in Heaven may ask of them. They can have the strength to remain firmly on the path that leads to eternal life and can better assist their families and others in finding and following this same path of discipleship.

Live [1.2]

We live the gospel of Jesus Christ and strive for the companionship of the Spirit. [1.2.1]

One of the greatest contributions a teacher can make toward helping students accomplish the purpose outlined in the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes is consistent and faithful obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. As teachers strive to develop Christlike character and seek to know and please Heavenly Father in every aspect of their lives, they are blessed with a measure of divine power that can influence the way the gospel message is received and understood by their students.

When teachers faithfully live the gospel, they qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. This companionship is crucial to the success of teachers in seminaries and institutes. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord stresses "if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:14). Elder Robert D. Hales counseled: "The responsibilities of teachers in seminary and institute of religion are many, but in order to meet these responsibilities, teachers must first strive for personal righteousness. As teachers, we must live the gospel in such a way that we will have the Spirit to ever be with us" ("Teaching by Faith" [an evening with Elder Robert D. Hales, Feb. 1, 2002], 1).

Our conduct and relationships are exemplary in the home, in the classroom, and in the community. [1.2.2]

Teachers have a responsibility to conduct their lives with integrity and to be worthy examples of the doctrines and principles they teach. In all circumstances, teachers should speak, serve, and live in a way that is consistent with a person who loves the Lord and has the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Of primary importance is the way teachers act within the privacy of their own home and how they treat their spouse and children. These most important relationships should be characterized “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41). President Ezra Taft Benson expressed the following: “We hope there is an excellent relationship between you as husband and wife. We hope that your home has in it the spirit of peace and love of the Savior, and that this is evident to all those who come into your home. In your homes you should not have quarreling and friction. . . . You, as a couple, represent the First Presidency in all you do and in the way you appear” (“The Gospel Teacher and His Message” [address to CES religious educators, Sept. 17, 1976], 7).

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In the classroom, teachers have the opportunity day after day to demonstrate Christlike characteristics, such as charity, patience, kindness, respect, and reverence for sacred things. Teachers should maintain a positive and appropriate relationship with students and avoid giving undue attention to anyone in a way that could be misunderstood or misinterpreted or cause speculation or rumor.

Teachers should strive to conduct themselves in a Christlike manner while participating in and attending school, community, and Church activities and events. They should seek to develop and maintain appropriate and supportive relationships with parents, colleagues, ecclesiastical leaders, and people in the community. By doing these things consistently, teachers demonstrate a genuine inward commitment to living the gospel of Jesus Christ, and their power to influence lives for good will be increased.



“Each of you realizes, long since, that you teach what you are. . . . Your traits will be more remembered, compositely, than a particular truth in a particular lesson. . . . For if our discipleship is serious, it will show, and it will be remembered. Such perspectives about how you will be remembered, plus your personal righteousness, will permit you to make a genuine contribution to the lives of your students.”

(Neal A. Maxwell, “But a Few Days” [address to CES religious educators, Sept. 10, 1982], 2)

We continually seek to improve our performance, knowledge, attitude, and character. [1.2.3]

As children of God, teachers have within them a portion of divinity that engenders a desire to improve, to progress, to become more like Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. A teacher should continually cultivate this desire and, with the help of the Lord and others, act on impressions that lead to improvement. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley stressed the ongoing need for personal growth:

“I believe in improvement. I believe in growth. . . .

“Keep on growing, my brothers and sisters, whether you are thirty or whether you are seventy” (“Four Imperatives for Religious Educators” [address to CES religious educators, Sept. 15, 1978], 2).

Improvement takes desire, diligence, patience, and the help of the Lord sought through pondering and prayer. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught an important principle about self-improvement: “Most of us have had some experience with self-improvement efforts. My experience has taught me this about how people and organizations improve: the best place to look is for small changes we could make in things we do often. There is power in steadiness and repetition. And if we can be led by inspiration to choose the right small things to change, consistent obedience will bring great

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improvement" ("The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest" [an evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 6, 1998], 3).

In seminary and institute, teachers should continually seek to improve their performance, knowledge, attitude, and character.

Performance. Teachers should regularly seek to improve their performance in teaching and administrative responsibilities. They can do so through a balanced, steady, and diligent effort to understand and apply fundamental principles and skills. Seeking help from seminary and institute materials and from supervisors, colleagues, students, priesthood leaders, and others will help teachers and leaders obtain a more accurate assessment of their performance, as well as the guidance necessary to help them improve where needed most.

"None of us, my brethren and sisters, knows enough. The learning process is an endless process. We must read, we must observe, we must assimilate, and we must ponder that to which we expose our minds."



(Gordon B. Hinckley, "Four Imperatives for Religious Educators," 2)

Knowledge. Teachers should consistently strive to study the context, content, and doctrines and principles contained in the scriptures and the words of the prophets. As they do, they will grow in their understanding of the Savior's gospel and Atonement and will be better able to bless the lives of their students. Teachers should develop their knowledge and understanding of the principles and effective methods of teaching that are contained in the scriptures as well as in seminary and institute materials. They should also be familiar with principles of appropriate administration (see section 1.4, "Administer" on page 7) and understand policies and practices of seminaries and institutes.

Attitude. The attitude teachers have determines to a great degree their own happiness and the ability they have to influence their students for good. Teachers who continually strive to be of good cheer (see D&C 68:6), seek to serve others, work to achieve unity, and make the best of challenging situations will bless the lives of the students and colleagues with whom they associate.

Character. Teachers who strive to live the gospel and who consistently and genuinely try to improve their performance, knowledge, and attitude will naturally develop the character necessary to assist in accomplishing the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes. Elder Richard G. Scott taught:

"We become what we want to be by consistently *being* what we want to *become* each day. Righteous character is a precious manifestation of what you are becoming. . . . Righteous character is more valuable than any material object you own, any knowledge you have gained through study, or any goals you have attained" ("The Transforming Power of Faith and Character," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 43).

Ultimately, the key in seeking to improve our performance, knowledge, attitude, and character lies in following the example of Jesus Christ. President Howard W. Hunter said, "It is the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Christ that shapes our behavior and forms our character in all areas of our life—personally, within the home, in our professions and community life, as well as in our devotion to the Church that bears his name" ("Standing as Witnesses of God," *Ensign*, May 1990, 60).

"If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. . . . And my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."



(Ether 12:27)

Teach [1.3]

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We teach students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets. [1.3.1]

A knowledge, understanding, and testimony of the doctrines and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ will provide students with direction and sufficient strength to make choices that are consistent with Heavenly Father's will.

A doctrine is a fundamental, unchanging truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught:

"True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.

"The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior" ("Little Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).

Elder Richard G. Scott emphasized, "Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances" ("Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 86).

The scriptures and the words of the prophets contain the doctrines and principles of the gospel that teachers and students should seek to understand, teach, and apply. To those who teach the gospel in the latter days, the Lord instructed, "Teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel" (D&C 42:12). The Lord also affirmed the importance of understanding and following the teachings of latter-day prophets. "Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them. . . . His word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth" (D&C 21:4–5).

In 1938, President J. Reuben Clark Jr., speaking for the First Presidency, gave a landmark address to seminary and institute teachers. In that address he said:

"Your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days. You are to teach this gospel, using as your sources and authorities the standard works of the Church and the words of those whom God has called to lead His people in these last days. . . .

"You are not, whether high or low, to change the doctrines of the Church or to modify them as they are declared by and in the standard works of the Church and by those whose authority it is to declare the mind and will of the Lord to the Church" (*The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. [1994], 10; see also D&C 42:12–13).



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These doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to understanding and edification. [1.3.2]

When deciding how to teach gospel doctrines and principles, teachers should select methods that lead students to understand these important truths and to be edified and uplifted by the Holy Ghost. Teachers and students understand doctrines and principles when they grasp their meaning, see their relationship with other principles and doctrines, and comprehend their significance in the plan of salvation, as well as in their own lives. True understanding of eternal principles and doctrines can only come as individuals live gospel principles and as their minds are illuminated by the Holy Ghost.

Edification should accompany an understanding of the scriptures. The word *edify* comes originally from the Latin roots *aedes*, meaning a dwelling or temple, and *facere* meaning to make (see *Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged* [2003], “edify”). Therefore, *edify* relates to building a temple and means to build or strengthen spiritually. Joy, peace, enlightenment, and a desire to live righteously are associated with edification. The scriptures promise that if both the teacher and the student act under the direction of the Spirit in the teaching and learning process, then “he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22).

We help students fulfill their role in the learning process and prepare them to teach the gospel to others. [1.3.3]

Gospel learning that fosters conversion and helps the gospel sink deep into the hearts of students requires more than diligent effort on the part of the teacher. Spiritual learning requires effort and the exercise of agency by the learner. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught, “True conversion depends on a student seeking freely in faith, with great effort” (“We Must Raise Our Sights,” 4). Elder David A. Bednar emphasized that the effort put forth by students invites the influence of the Holy Ghost into their hearts:

“A teacher can explain, demonstrate, persuade, and testify, and do so with great spiritual power and effectiveness. Ultimately, however, the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter. . . .

“A learner exercising agency by acting in accordance with correct principles opens his or her heart to the Holy Ghost—and invites His teaching, testifying power, and confirming witness” (“Seek Learning by Faith” [an evening with Elder David A. Bednar, Feb. 3, 2006], 1, 3).

The scriptures teach that those seeking spiritual learning are to prepare their minds and hearts to receive instruction; to diligently seek knowledge and understanding through study, reflection, and prayer; and to follow the impressions they receive from the Holy Ghost (see Ezra 7:10; 1 Nephi 10:17–19; D&C 138:1–11; Joseph Smith—History 1:10–20). For

many students, putting forth such effort to learn from the scriptures may seem unfamiliar and somewhat difficult. However, teachers can help them understand, accept, and fulfill their role in gospel learning. Teachers can help

“It is in the sincerity and consistency of our faith-inspired action that we indicate to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, our willingness to learn and receive instruction from the Holy Ghost.”

(David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” 3)



students learn how to take an active role in their spiritual learning by encouraging them to:

- Develop a habit of daily scripture study.
- Prepare their hearts and minds for the influence of the Spirit.
- Discover and express doctrines and principles that are relevant to their personal lives.
- Deepen understanding of the scriptures through diligent study, meditation, and prayer.
- Ask questions and seek for answers that help them better understand the gospel and how it applies to their lives.
- Share insights, experiences, and feelings.
- Explain gospel doctrines and principles to others and testify of their truthfulness.
- Develop scripture study skills, such as marking, cross-referencing, and using the scripture study aids.

Notes

By fulfilling their role in spiritual learning, students manifest their willingness to be taught by the Holy Ghost. They are often more committed to and excited about the scriptures. They understand and recall saving doctrines and principles more clearly and are more likely to apply what they have been taught. As students discover gospel doctrines and principles, ask questions, and share responses, they also learn valuable skills for studying on their own.

Through such participation, students will be enabled to teach the gospel more effectively to their families, friends, and others. They will also be better prepared to teach the doctrines and principles of the gospel in the future as missionaries, parents, teachers, and leaders in the Church.

Administer [1.4]

We administer our programs and resources appropriately. [1.4.1]

Administering may be defined as both leading and serving people as well as directing and managing programs and resources. As the perfect example in all things, Jesus Christ modeled the divine attributes of a true leader. No matter what their current assignment may be, all leaders and teachers in seminary and institute have the opportunity and responsibility to both lead and manage in a Christlike manner.

Attributes of charity, vision, and humility allow us to accomplish the Lord's work as He would desire. *Charity*, or the pure love of Christ, should be the basis of a teacher's relationship with students, priesthood leaders, parents, colleagues, and supervisors. Charity is not merely a feeling but a manner of acting and being (see Moroni 7:45). A leader with *vision* gives inspired direction, creates a sense of purpose, and instills enthusiasm in those around him. The scriptures teach that "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). *Humility* allows administrators and teachers to recognize their dependence on the Lord and encourages them to work cooperatively



"[The students'] decision to participate is an exercise in agency that permits the Holy Ghost to communicate a personalized message suited to their individual needs. Creating an atmosphere of participation enhances the probability that the Spirit will teach more important lessons than you can communicate.

"That participation will bring into their lives the direction of the Spirit."

(Richard G. Scott, "To Learn and to Teach More Effectively," in *Brigham Young University 2007–2008 Speeches* [2008], 4–5)

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"And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

(Moroni 7:45)



with others to accomplish the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes. The Lord said, "No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care" (D&C 12:8).

Every teacher and leader has the opportunity and responsibility to direct and manage programs and resources appropriately. Administrative responsibilities are for the spiritual purpose of blessing individuals. "Preparing budgets, completing reports, caring for Church property and resources, ensuring safety, overseeing programs, . . . participating in councils, [and communicating with students, parents, and priesthood leaders] are all essential administrative duties (*Administering Appropriately: A Handbook for CES Leaders and Teachers* [2003], 2). Elder Henry B. Eyring taught, "Never, never underestimate the spiritual value of doing temporal things well for those whom you serve" ("The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life" [CES symposium on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 17, 1990], 7).

Our efforts assist parents in their responsibility to strengthen their families. [1.4.2]

Parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children the gospel of Jesus Christ; to oversee their social development, interpersonal relationships, and dress and grooming standards; and to answer their doctrinal questions. Church leaders assist parents in this responsibility.

Seminary and institute leaders and teachers primarily assist parents by teaching students the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets, emphasizing the doctrinal importance of the family and the high priority that family members and family activities deserve (see *Administering Appropriately*, 4). Teachers should encourage students to honor their parents and to seek their parents' counsel and guidance. Teachers could also share with parents what is being taught in class.

We work closely with priesthood leaders as we invite students to participate and as we provide a spiritual environment where students can associate with one another and learn together. [1.4.3]

All programs within Seminaries and Institutes of Religion operate under the direction of both general and local priesthood leaders who hold the appropriate priesthood keys.

In their efforts to bless the youth and young adults, it is important that seminary and institute leaders and teachers work closely and cooperatively with local priesthood leaders. Under the direction of priesthood leaders, they counsel and work together to ensure that each youth and young adult is invited and encouraged to enroll in, attend, and complete appropriate courses of study. Teachers and administrators should be actively involved with priesthood leaders in seeking to enroll and retain seminary and institute students and should not be content to teach only those students who come to their classes.

In harmony with established policies and procedures, seminary and institute leaders and teachers also work closely with priesthood leaders to provide facilities for classes and an appropriate spiritual and social environment where testimonies can be strengthened and knowledge of the gospel increased. Teachers and administrators should follow current seminary and institute policy and should counsel with local priesthood leaders about the type and frequency of social and service activities so they support rather than interfere with activities planned and conducted by priesthood and auxiliary leaders.

Teachers and administrators should also work cooperatively with Young Men and Young Women leaders and appropriately encourage the youth to participate in the Duty to God and the Personal Progress programs. Where feasible, seminary teachers should counsel with other teachers, advisers, and leaders of youth about the needs of youth.

(For more detail on principles and practices of seminary and institute administration, see the handbook *Administering Appropriately*.)

Notes



2

Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning

The Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion suggests three primary teaching aims that administrators and teachers seek to achieve in order to fulfill the purpose of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion:

1. We teach students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets.
2. These doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to understanding and edification.
3. We help students fulfill their role in the learning process and prepare them to teach the gospel to others.

To help achieve these aims, teachers and students in seminary and institute are specifically encouraged to implement the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning.

Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning

Teachers and students should—

- Teach and learn by the Spirit.
- Cultivate a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose.
- Study the scriptures daily, and read the text for the course.
- Understand the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets.
- Identify, understand, feel the truth and importance of, and apply gospel doctrines and principles.
- Explain, share, and testify of gospel doctrines and principles.
- Master key scripture passages and the Basic Doctrines.

These principles, practices, and outcomes are interconnected. When implemented wisely and in harmony with each other, these fundamentals contribute to the students' ability to understand the scriptures and the doctrines and principles they contain. They also encourage students to take an active role in their learning of the gospel and increase students' ability to live the gospel and teach it to others.

Teach and Learn by the Spirit [2.1]

Gospel teaching and learning takes place through the power of the Holy Ghost. Teaching and learning by the Spirit occurs when the Holy Ghost is performing His role or functions with the teacher, with the student, or with both. Only through teaching and learning by the Spirit will students come to understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ in such a way that they may qualify for eternal life.

President Henry B. Eyring stressed the crucial role the Holy Ghost has in spiritual learning when he taught: “Our students cannot know of God, and so love as they must love, unless they are taught by the Holy Spirit. Only by the Spirit can they know that God loved us enough to send His Son to be the propitiation for our sins and that Jesus is the Son of God and that Christ paid the price of their sins. Only by the Spirit can they know that Heavenly Father and His resurrected and glorified Son appeared to Joseph Smith. Only by the Spirit can they know that the Book of Mormon is the true word of God. And only by inspiration can they feel the love of the Father and the Son for them in giving us the ordinances necessary to receive eternal life. Only by obtaining those witnesses, placed deep into their hearts by the Holy Ghost, will they be rooted on a sure foundation to stand steady through the temptations and trials of their lives” (“To Know and to Love God” [an evening with President Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 26, 2010], 2).

The following list includes some functions of the Holy Ghost directly related to His role in gospel teaching and learning:

- He bears witness of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:3; Ether 12:41).
- He edifies (lifts or builds spiritually) both the teacher and the student (see 1 Corinthians 14:12; D&C 50:22–23; 84:106).
- He bestows the “fruit of the Spirit,” which includes such things as joy, love, peace, patience, and gentleness (see Galatians 5:22–23; Romans 15:13; D&C 6:23; 11:12–13).
- He empowers a person to speak with authority and boldness (see 1 Nephi 10:22; Alma 18:35; Moroni 8:16).
- He testifies to the truthfulness of gospel doctrines and principles (see John 15:26; D&C 21:9; 100:8).
- He imparts truth, knowledge, insights, understanding, and enlightenment (see John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:9–11, 14; D&C 6:14; 11:13–14; 76:5–10, 116).
- He helps teachers and students remember ideas, concepts, or principles (see John 14:26).
- He inspires a person in what to say or what not to say (see Luke 12:11–12; 2 Nephi 32:7; D&C 84:85; 100:5–6).
- He carries truth to the hearts of people (see 2 Nephi 33:1).
- He softens the hearts of people (see 1 Nephi 2:16; Alma 24:8).
- He gives comfort (see John 14:26; D&C 88:3).
- He sanctifies and changes hearts (see Mosiah 5:2; 3 Nephi 27:20; Moroni 6:4).

Once they understand the crucial role the Holy Ghost performs in spiritual learning, teachers will do all they can to invite the Spirit to fulfill these functions. To do this, teachers will strive for personal worthiness. They will offer the “prayer of faith” (D&C 42:14) and will seek to be thoroughly prepared for each lesson. They will seek to focus on their students’ learning experience and to be serene in their hearts rather than feeling upset and anxious about other things. They will exhibit a spirit of humble inquiry. They will also encourage their students to invite the Holy Ghost into their learning experience.



Notes

Teachers and students can help create a climate conducive to the Holy Ghost by:

- Having meaningful devotionals.
- Reading and teaching from the scriptures and the words of the prophets.
- Focusing examples and discussions on the Savior and bearing testimony of Him.
- Stating gospel doctrines and principles simply and clearly.
- Taking time for thoughtful pondering during moments of inspired silence.
- Sharing appropriate personal experiences and testifying of doctrines and principles.
- Using inspirational music.
- Expressing love and gratitude for one another and for the Lord.

Teachers can sense whether or not the functions of the Spirit are manifest in their classes by considering questions such as the following:

- Do the students feel an increase of love for the Savior, the gospel, and the scriptures?
- Do students clearly understand the principles being taught?
- Are the students edified and do they feel inspired to act on the principles that they have learned?
- Is the class increasing in unity?
- Are testimonies expressed and strengthened?
- Are students interested and engaged in the learning process?
- Is there a feeling of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith” (Galatians 5:22) in the classroom?

“An unrushed atmosphere is absolutely essential if you are to have the Spirit of the Lord present in your class.”

(Jeffrey R. Holland, “Teaching and Learning in the Church” [worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 10, 2007], *Ensign*, June 2007, 91)



It is important to remember that no teacher, no matter how gifted or faithful, can fulfill the functions of the Spirit. Occasionally teachers may try to manufacture a spiritual experience. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: “You cannot force spiritual things. . . . You can no more force the Spirit to respond than you can force a bean to sprout, or an egg to hatch before its time. You can create a climate to foster growth, nourish, and protect; but you cannot force or compel: you must await the growth” (“Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

Teachers seeking to teach by the Spirit should not rely primarily on their intellect, teaching expertise, or personality but on the influence of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 4:34). They should also avoid manipulating emotions or consciously trying to elicit tears as evidence that the Spirit is present. President Howard W. Hunter cautioned: “I think if we are not careful as . . . teachers working in the classroom every day, we may begin to try to counterfeit the true influence of the Spirit of the Lord by unworthy and manipulative means. I get concerned when it appears that strong emotion or free-flowing tears are equated with the presence of the Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, but that outward

manifestation ought not to be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself" ("Eternal Investments" [an evening with President Howard W. Hunter, Feb. 10, 1989], 4).

Teachers should be cautious of using phrases such as "The Spirit told me to . . ." or "The Spirit said I should. . . ." Intentionally or unintentionally, these phrases can be perceived as self-promoting and can imply an exaggerated level of spirituality and could result in a form of spiritual coercion. It is generally sufficient for teachers to act on promptings from the Spirit without announcing that they are doing so.

Elder Henry B. Eyring offered this counsel: "Giving students experiences with the Spirit is far more important than talking about it. And just know that each person experiences the Spirit a little differently. . . . I think it is so individual that I would be a little careful in trying to say too much specifically. I think experience with it . . . might be better than if you keep saying, 'Do you feel the Spirit?' I think that can be counterproductive" ("Elder Richard G. Scott and Elder Henry B. Eyring Discussion" [CES satellite training broadcast, Aug. 2003], 8).

Teachers should keep in mind that teaching by the Spirit does not remove their responsibility for diligent, thoughtful lesson preparation, including using the curriculum that has been provided. On the other hand, teaching by the Spirit requires more than merely following every curriculum suggestion without prayer, thought, or possible adaptation. In addition, teachers should not be so focused on rigidly following their lesson outline that they are not open to receive and follow impressions from the Spirit during class.

Cultivate a Learning Environment of Love, Respect, and Purpose [2.2]

When teachers and students love and respect the Lord, one another, and the word of God, learning is enhanced. A shared sense of purpose focuses efforts and expectations and gives direction to the classroom experience. Establishing and cultivating such an environment of love, respect, and purpose is the responsibility of both teachers and the students and invites the edifying influence of the Holy Ghost.

Love and Respect [2.2.1]

Love softens hearts and invites the influence of the Holy Ghost. When teachers love as the Savior loves, they see others as He sees them. Christlike love inspires a teacher to never give up in helping each young man and woman to become truly converted. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught: "When we are called to teach, we should accept our calling and teach because of our love for God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. In addition, a gospel teacher should always teach with love for the students. . . . Love of God and love of His children is the highest reason for service. Those who teach out of love will be magnified as instruments in the hands of Him whom they serve" ("Gospel Teaching," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 79).

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Teachers and students who love the Lord and who know of His love for them feel a genuine desire to be close to Him and to become more like Him. They respect and reverence His word and the words of His prophets in ways that motivate them to study the scriptures diligently, to apply what they learn, and to share what they are learning with others.



When students know they are loved and respected by their teacher and other students, they are more likely to come to class ready to learn. The acceptance and love they feel from others can soften their hearts, reduce fear, and engender within them the desire and confidence necessary to share their experiences and feelings with their teacher and other class members.

Teachers can nurture students' feelings of love and respect for the Lord by helping them understand the Atonement, by teaching them of their divine nature and infinite worth to Heavenly Father and His Son, and by speaking and testifying of Them in an appropriate and reverent manner.

Teachers should develop the love and respect they have for their students. Doing so will help them radiate the pure love of Christ for their students and help them teach with

patience and compassion. Teachers can learn students' names and seek to know of their interests, talents, challenges, and abilities. They can pray for their students, collectively and individually. Teachers can personally welcome each student to class and give every student an opportunity to participate. They should listen carefully as students ask questions or share their thoughts or feelings. In addition, teachers might attend performances, athletic contests, or other events where their students are participating. In their efforts to love their students, teachers should not try to take the place of parents or priesthood leaders or to become personal counselors to the students.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

(1 Corinthians 13:1–2)



Most teachers will have students in their classes who, to some degree, have limited abilities or physical or mental disabilities. They too are children of Heavenly Father and need to learn the gospel regardless of personal challenges or limitations experienced in mortality. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 210). Teachers need to be sensitive to all students and consider their individual needs and abilities as they prepare and present their lessons.

One of the most helpful things teachers can do to develop genuine love for their students is to seek the gift of charity through sincere prayer. The prophet Mormon taught:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:48).

A Sense of Purpose [2.2.2]

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A sense of purpose shared by teacher and student can increase faith and give direction and meaning to the classroom experience. Students should understand that they are attending class to come to know Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to progress toward eternal life through a study of the scriptures and the words of the prophets. They should believe that through approaching the Lord in an attitude of inquiry and prayer, they can be taught and edified by the Holy Ghost. As teachers and students approach the study of the scriptures with the expectation to learn through the Spirit and from one another, they cultivate an environment that invites revelation.

Teachers can encourage a sense of purpose in the classroom by doing the following:

- *Expect students to fulfill their role as learners.* A sense of purpose exists in a class where teachers expect students to fulfill their role as learners and assist them in doing so and where students are trusted to contribute in significant ways. Teachers with a sense of purpose, who truly love their students, will care too much about their progress and success to be satisfied with only a little effort. Such teachers will encourage with love and will lift their students to reach their potential as learners and disciples of Jesus Christ.
- *Be sincere, passionate, and energetic about the scriptures and the gospel.* Students generally have a greater desire to learn with purpose when they sense their teacher's enthusiasm for and faith in the material being discussed.
- *Prepare edifying lessons.* When teachers come to class with a well-prepared, edifying lesson and feel confident in the direction they have been guided to take, they convey a sense of purpose that students easily recognize.
- *Prepare needed materials and equipment.* Teachers should arrive at their classroom before the students to prepare any necessary materials and equipment. This provides opportunity for the teacher to greet each student as they arrive. Students should strive to be on time to class and have all appropriate learning materials—such as scriptures, marking pencil, and journal—at their desks when class begins.
- *Avoid wasting time.* As class begins on time and when students perceive that there is not time to waste, they will feel a sense of purpose.
- *Establish class routines.* Establishing routines for often-repeated class activities brings a sense of order and purpose. Class routines encourage participation from each student and help teachers and students to be more efficient with the use of precious class time. Routines can be established for activities such as retrieving and putting away scriptures and learning materials, organizing and providing uplifting devotionals, and distributing and collecting papers and materials. Making announcements, recording student attendance, checking on assignments, and conducting other business are best done before beginning the devotional and the lesson.

Notes

Additional Suggestions for Cultivating an Appropriate Learning Environment [2.2.3]

In addition to love, respect, and purpose, an ideal gospel learning setting also consists of order, reverence, and a feeling of peace. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught that “inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings,” and that “reverence invites revelation” (“Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21–22). Following are some additional suggestions teachers can use to establish and maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to gospel learning.

Establish the physical setting for learning.

The physical surroundings can have an impact on what students experience in gospel learning. Teachers should do all they can to prepare the classroom so that students feel comfortable and are able to focus on the lesson. Some considerations might include:

Seating. Except for very unusual circumstances, every student should have a comfortable place to sit, a place for their scriptures and study materials, and a place to write. The seating arrangement should allow students to easily see the teacher and any visual resources the teacher uses. Where possible, different seating arrangements can be used to support different kinds of learning activities. Having assigned seating can help teachers learn the names of students quickly, organize the class for small group work or scripture mastery exercises, and separate students who tend to talk with each other during class. Teachers should be sensitive to students who may have mobility or visual impairments by making accommodations that encourage their participation in class.

Distractions. Teachers should try to eliminate any distractions that could interrupt the teaching and learning process. If teaching takes place in a home, there may be some particular challenges, but even in that setting a teacher can minimize interruptions with careful planning.

Classroom appearance. Gospel-related pictures, illustrations, posters, and other displays can often enhance the learning setting. A classroom that is neat, clean, and orderly also encourages reverence and fosters an environment conducive to the influence of the Spirit.

Teacher appearance. Students will more readily recognize the importance of the learning experience when the teacher’s dress and grooming is modest and appropriate and reflects the sacred nature of the gospel message.

Invite the Spirit through effective devotionals.

Class should begin with a brief devotional. A devotional can be an excellent way to unite students by turning their thoughts and their hearts to spiritual things. It can help teachers and students feel the Spirit and be ready to learn. A devotional generally consists of a hymn, a prayer, and a thought from the scriptures. It is most effective when students share feelings and insights they have had in their



personal scripture study and when they bear testimony. Long or elaborate devotionals not only take time away from the lesson, but may actually cause the Spirit to withdraw. Devotionals that include the serving of refreshments will almost certainly promote a light and playful mood rather than a spiritual one. Teachers should take time to talk with students, especially class leaders, about the purpose of devotionals, what they can do to make them better, and how they can encourage everyone to participate.

Discuss principles of spiritual learning.

At the beginning of the year, teachers may involve students in discussing what conditions encourage spiritual learning (see 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; D&C 50:17–22; 88:121–26). These discussions could focus on behaviors that invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with them in gospel learning as well as on behaviors that cause the Spirit to withdraw. Teachers and students should encourage each other on an ongoing basis to apply the things they agreed would invite the Spirit. Such efforts can help both students and teachers understand and fulfill the role they play in inviting the Spirit into the learning process.

Choose learning activities carefully.

Teachers should be aware that different learning activities encourage different moods and attitudes in the students. For example, after leading a boisterous instructional game at the beginning of his class, one teacher was frustrated when he could not achieve a more spiritual conclusion to the lesson. Another teacher found her discipline problems escalated when she gave out refreshments during class.

Be attentive to student behavior, and respond appropriately.

Teachers should be aware of what is occurring during the lesson and respond in an appropriate manner. If students seem bored or restless, it may be because they are not involved or they do not understand what is being taught or how the lesson applies to them. To help the students focus, the teacher may need to change something in the lesson presentation. If students are acting in improper ways and causing the Spirit to withdraw from class, the teacher needs to seek inspiration in dealing with the problem rather than ignoring it. Teachers should also watch for students who do not interact with other students or who seem to be lonely. These students may need some additional personal attention from the teacher or from other students in the class. In such cases, teachers may talk to parents and priesthood leaders to determine if there are underlying causes or conditions that they should be aware of.

Correct disorderly or inappropriate behavior.

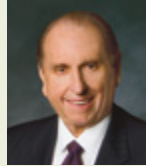
There are some general principles to keep in mind that will help a teacher invite proper order and respect in the classroom. To have order does not always mean having complete silence; nor does it mean that a class cannot be enjoyable and fun. But a disorderly or irreverent student or group of students can have a negative impact on the learning process and hinder the influence of the Holy Ghost.

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"Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved."

(Thomas S. Monson, "Finding Joy in the Journey," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 86)



When a student or a group of students is misbehaving, it can be frustrating for the teacher and other students. At such times, it is especially important for teachers to keep control of their emotions and to seek the influence of the Spirit. How teachers respond to any given incident may be more important than the incident itself and can either increase or decrease the respect and

trust of the students. As teachers correct improper behavior, they need to be firm but friendly, fair, and caring and then quickly return to the lesson. To ridicule a student publicly may correct a student's behavior for a time but will not edify either the teacher or the student. It may also result in other students fearing or distrusting the teacher. Teachers should remember the righteous influence of persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, unfeigned love, and kindness (see D&C 121:41–42).

There are some specific steps teachers can take to handle problems as they occur. These are possible approaches to discipline problems that may not work the same way with every student or situation:

- *Make eye contact.* Often students talk to each other at inappropriate times because they think the teacher will not notice. The teacher could look at the students and briefly make eye contact so they know the teacher is aware of what is happening.
- *Stop talking.* If students are talking when they should be listening, the teacher could stop talking, even in midsentence if necessary. Raising the voice to talk over them will not generally solve the problem.
- *Move closer.* Another action teachers can take to correct behavior without having to directly confront a student is to move and stand beside the misbehaving student. The teacher can continue with the lesson, but the student will usually feel the teacher's presence and stop what he or she is doing.
- *Direct a question.* Without calling attention to the inappropriate behavior, a teacher can ask the offending student a question related to the lesson. This is not done to embarrass the student, but to help bring him or her back into the discussion.

There may be times when students do not respond to these less direct efforts and continue to disrupt the class. Following are some additional, more direct steps a teacher can take to maintain order:

- *Consult with the student privately.* The Lord said that if someone offends another, the offended person should talk with the offender "between him or her and thee alone" (D&C 42:88). The teacher could counsel with the student about why he or she is misbehaving and let him or her know that the behavior must change or additional steps will be taken. Teachers should make sure they differentiate the students' behavior from their individual worth. It is important for teachers to remember that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). They should communicate to the student that while the poor behavior is unacceptable, he or she is valued. Teachers should remember to follow the Lord's counsel and show

“forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved” (D&C 121:43).

- *Separate the students causing the disruption.*
- *Consult with parents or priesthood leaders.* If unacceptable behavior persists, it is often helpful for the teacher to consult with the student’s parents. Frequently parents can provide additional insights and ideas that will help correct the concern. In some cases, the student’s bishop may be able to help.
- *Dismiss the student from class.* President David O. McKay gave the following counsel to teachers: “If [your effort] fails, then you can make an appeal to the parents, and you can say: ‘If his misconduct continues, we shall have to put him off the roll.’ That is the extreme action. Any teacher can dismiss a [student]; you should exhaust all your other sources before you come to that. But order we *must* have!—it is necessary for soul growth, and if one [student] refuses, or if two [students] refuse to produce that element, then they must leave. Better one [student] starve than an entire class be slowly poisoned” (“Guidance of a Human Soul—The Teacher’s Greatest Responsibility,” *Instructor*, Sept. 1965, 343).

Before asking a student to leave class for any extended period of time, the teacher should counsel with the parents, seminary and institute supervisors, and appropriate priesthood leaders. In such circumstances it is important that the teacher help the students and the parents understand that the student is choosing to leave seminary by not choosing to behave in an acceptable manner. It is the disruption that is unacceptable, not the student. When he or she chooses otherwise, the student will be welcome to return to class.

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“If those [students] are unresponsive, maybe you can’t teach them yet, but you can love them. And if you love them today, maybe you can teach them tomorrow.”

(Jeffrey R. Holland, “Teaching and Learning in the Church,” 102)

Study the Scriptures Daily and Read the Text for the Course [2.3]

Study the Scriptures Daily [2.3.1]

Daily personal scripture study provides a consistent opportunity for teachers and students to learn the gospel, develop testimony, and hear the voice of the Lord. The Lord states in the Doctrine and Covenants, “The holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction” (D&C 33:16). The prophet Nephi taught that those who “press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, . . . shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20) and that “the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

Latter-day prophets have stressed the importance of studying the scriptures every day. President Harold B. Lee cautioned, “If we’re not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner, our spirituality isn’t increasing in depth” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 66). Elder Howard W. Hunter also taught, “It is certain that one who studies the scriptures every day accomplishes far more than one who devotes considerable time one day and then lets days go by before continuing” (“Reading the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 64).

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Elder Richard G. Scott implored: “Please kindle a love of the scriptures in the mind and heart of each precious youth. Help ignite within each youth that flame of unquenchable fire that motivates those who have felt it with a desire to know evermore of the word of the Lord, to understand his teachings, to apply them, and to share them with others. . . .

“First, walk with your students step-by-step through many passages of the sacred word of the Lord. Help them feel your enthusiasm, respect, and love for the scriptures.

“Second, help them learn to read, ponder, and pray privately to discover the power and peace that flow from the scriptures” (“Four Fundamentals for Those Who Teach and Inspire Youth” [CES symposium on the Old Testament, Aug. 14, 1987], 5).

“Before you can strengthen your students, it is essential that you study the doctrines of the kingdom and learn the gospel by *both* study and faith.”

(Ezra Taft Benson, “The Gospel Teacher and His Message” [address to CES religious educators, Sept. 17, 1976], 3)



There are few things teachers can do that will have a more powerful and long-lasting influence for good in the lives of their students than helping them learn to love the scriptures and to study them on a daily basis. This often begins as teachers set an example of daily scripture study in their own lives. Engaging in meaningful, personal scripture study every day qualifies teachers to offer personal testimony to their students of the value of the scriptures in their own lives. Such testimony can be an important catalyst in helping students commit to studying the scriptures regularly on their own.

Teachers should consistently teach students the doctrines and principles behind daily personal scripture study. Teachers can also encourage each student to set aside time every day for personal scripture study; help students be accountable for their daily study by using an appropriate tracking system that measures their performance; and give students regular opportunities in class to share with each other some of the things they are learning and feeling in their personal scripture study. As teachers encourage daily scripture study, they should be careful to not embarrass or discourage any students who may struggle to study the scriptures on their own.

“Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 84:85)



Students with reading or other learning disabilities should be given the option to study the scriptures in a format that may be better suited for their needs, such as audio, American Sign Language, or Braille. Many students who have difficulty reading benefit from following along on the printed page while someone else is reading aloud.

Scripture-study skills and methods

To help students be successful in their personal study of the scriptures, teachers can assist them in developing and utilizing a variety of scripture-study skills and methods. All of the following skills and methods, as well as others not addressed in this handbook, should be directed at helping students to learn by the Spirit, understand the scriptures, and discover and apply gospel doctrines and principles in their lives.

Use scripture study aids. The Church has prepared an extensive set of scripture study aids and included them in the standard works for some languages. (The Guide to the Scriptures is a group of study aids that has

been prepared for other languages.) These aids include such things as footnotes, chapter headings, topical indexes, the Bible Dictionary, and maps. They are some of the most valuable helps teachers and students can use as they study the scriptures. Teachers can help their students become familiar with these study aids and resources by using them appropriately during class. The Church has also made other helpful study resources available online.

Notes

Mark and annotate. One of the most helpful ways for teachers and students to capture and retain the things they learn is by marking and annotating the scriptures. To mark means to designate, distinguish, set apart, or bring attention to. This can be done by underlining, shading, or outlining key words or passages in the scriptures. To annotate means to add explanatory notes or commentary. Examples of scriptural annotations could include writing personal impressions, prophetic commentary, cross-references, word definitions, or insights gained from the comments of class members in the margins next to specific scripture passages.

Scripture marking and annotating can help students and teachers to:

- Make important words, phrases, ideas, truths, people, and events easier to remember and find.
- Clarify and discover meaning in the scriptural text.
- Preserve personal insights gained and those received from others.
- Prepare to teach the gospel to others.

Teachers can encourage students to mark their scriptures by saying something like, “As you search these verses, I invite you to mark a key principle that you discover,” or “Here is an important cross-reference. You may want to write this in the margin of your scriptures.” It is better to teach, illustrate, and practice the basic elements of scripture marking throughout the year than to teach a particular marking system.

Ponder. Pondering means to meditate or think deeply about something, and often includes prayer. As students learn to ponder during their personal scripture study, the Spirit will often reveal truth to them and help them know how they can become more like Jesus Christ.

After teaching the Nephites, the Savior told them, “Ponder upon the things which I have said” (3 Nephi 17:3). One way to help students participate spiritually in the lesson and to encourage them to apply and deepen their understanding of what they are learning is to give them time in class to meditate about what they have learned. At such times, teachers should encourage students to ask for help from the Lord.



"Invite [your students] to read more slowly and more carefully and with more questions in mind. Help them to ponder, to examine every word, every scriptural gem. Teach them to hold it up to the light and turn it, look and see what's reflected and refracted there. For some student, on a given day with a given need, such an examination may unearth a treasure hidden in a field: a pearl of great price; a pearl beyond price."

(Jeffrey R. Holland, "Students Need Teachers to Guide Them" [CES satellite broadcast, June 20, 1992], 4)



Ask questions. Learning to ask questions and seek for answers as they study the scriptures is one of the most important scripture-study skills students can develop. By asking questions, students can be led to a better understanding of the context and content of the scriptures, as well as to the discovery and understanding of important doctrines and principles of the gospel. Students can learn to ask questions that will lead them to feel the truth and importance of what they are studying and to know how to apply what they are learning.

Define difficult words and phrases. Dictionaries, student manuals, footnotes, and scripture study helps can often help students understand difficult words or phrases.

Visualize. Visualizing occurs as students picture in their minds what is taking place in the scriptural account. For example, students could imagine Peter walking on the water toward the Savior (see Matthew 14:28–29), or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego being cast into the fiery furnace (see Daniel 3:19–25). Visualizing can help make a scriptural account more vivid and real for the students.

Meshach, and Abed-nego being cast into the fiery furnace (see Daniel 3:19–25). Visualizing can help make a scriptural account more vivid and real for the students.

Liken scriptures. To liken the scriptures is to compare them to one's own life. Students can ask, "What circumstances and situations in my life are *like* the circumstances and situations in this passage of scripture?" or "How am I *like* the characters we are studying in the scriptures?" As students see the similarities between their experiences and those in the scriptures, they are better able to identify doctrines and principles of the gospel. They can also see how these principles can be applied in similar situations in their own lives.

Cross-reference. A cross-reference is an additional scripture reference that can provide added information and insight on the passage being studied. Cross-referencing or "linking" is connecting scripture references that help students understand a scripture passage or a doctrine or principle. Helpful cross-references can be found in the footnotes and other study aids, teacher and student manuals, and general conference talks. Teachers and students can also discover relevant cross-references in their own study.

Compare and contrast. A passage of scripture or a doctrine or principle is often clarified when it is compared or contrasted with something else. Noting the similarities or differences between teachings, people, or events can bring gospel truths into sharper focus. For example, contrasting the reign of King Benjamin with that of King Noah allows students to see very clearly the blessing of a righteous leader versus the destructive results of a wicked one. Comparing the lives, teachings, and testimonies of Jacob and Alma with the philosophies and lives of Sherem and Korihor can help students more easily recognize false philosophies in the world today and see how to combat them. Comparing and contrasting the various journeys to lands of promise made by the children of Israel, Lehi and his family, and the Jaredites can teach principles that help teachers and students in their own journeys through life.

Make lists. A list is a series of related thoughts, ideas, or instructions.

Looking for lists in the scriptures can help teachers and students identify key points the writer is emphasizing. For example, the Ten Commandments are a list (see Exodus 20). The Beatitudes can be seen as a list (see Matthew 5:3–12; 3 Nephi 12:3–11). Doctrine and Covenants 4 contains a list of the qualifications of those who are called to serve the Lord.

Look for connections, patterns, and themes. Students can be encouraged to look for connections, patterns, and themes as they study the scriptures. Elder David A. Bednar said, “*Searching* in the revelations for connections, patterns, and themes builds upon and adds to our spiritual knowledge . . . ; it broadens our perspective and understanding of the plan of salvation” (“A Reservoir of Living Water” [CES fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007], 2).

Teachers and students will generally use many of these skills and methods in class during the year. As they do so, teachers may occasionally pause and briefly discuss with their students the method or skill being used and encourage them to use it in their personal study.

Notes

Read the Text for the Course [2.3.2]

All of the standard works—the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—are inspired writings that contain doctrines and principles of the gospel. They illustrate the workings of God with man and teach about the Atonement of Jesus Christ. They are important individually, and collectively they give a greater understanding of the gospel and the plan of salvation prepared by our Father in Heaven.

Students and teachers should read and study the entire book of scripture that corresponds with each course of study (with the exception of selected portions of the Old Testament, as noted in the curriculum).

Understand the Context and Content of the Scriptures and the Words of the Prophets [2.4]

Understanding the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets prepares teachers and students to recognize the messages of the inspired authors. The context and content clarifies and illustrates gospel doctrines and principles recorded in the experiences and teachings of others. Although much of what follows addresses understanding the context and content of the scriptures specifically, most of the same principles and ideas can be applied to a study of the words and messages of latter-day prophets.



“Throughout the ages, Father in Heaven has inspired select men and women to find, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, solutions to life’s most perplexing problems. He has inspired those authorized servants to record those solutions as a type of handbook for those of His children who have faith in His plan of happiness and in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We have ready access to this guidance through the treasure we call the standard works—that is, the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.”

(Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 6)

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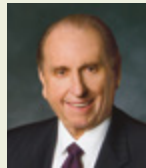
Context [2.4.1]

Context is (1) the passages of scripture that precede or follow a verse or series of verses or (2) the circumstances that surround or give background to a particular scriptural passage, event, or story.

The context is a means to understand the content of the scriptures. It provides background information that clarifies and brings a depth of understanding to the stories, teachings, doctrines, and principles in the scriptural text. Each scripture writer wrote as he was directed by the Holy Ghost, yet the writings were clothed in the imagery and culture of the writer. To understand their writings, teachers and students should mentally “step into their world” as much as possible to see things as the writer saw them. Following are some examples of different types of context.

“Become acquainted with the lessons the scriptures teach. Learn the background and setting of the Master’s parables and the prophets’ admonitions. Study them as though they were speaking to you, for such is the truth.”

(Thomas S. Monson, “Be Your Best Self,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 68)



Historical setting. Recognizing that Joseph Smith was in Liberty Jail during the receiving and writing of sections 121, 122, and 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants gives added depth and power to the doctrines and principles taught in those sections concerning such things as adversity and the use of power and authority.

Cultural setting. Knowing the background of the feast days and holidays of ancient Israel can clarify how they relate symbolically to the Savior and His mission. Being aware of the origin of the Samaritans and how the Jews felt about them at the time of Christ illuminates the parable of the Good Samaritan and deepens the meaning of the Savior’s encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria.

The question or situation that prompted the parable, event, doctrine, or principle. Understanding that Doctrine and Covenants 9 came as a response to Oliver Cowdery’s inability to translate clarifies the principles concerning revelation taught in that section.

“I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer . . . ?”

(Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:261)



Who is speaking to whom and why. Alma’s teachings on the Atonement, Resurrection, Judgment, mercy, and justice take on a deeper meaning when we realize that the context of those teachings was a visit with his son Corianton, who was concerned about the consequences of serious sins he had committed.

Geographic setting. Knowing the geography of Canaan deepens our understanding of where Lot and Abraham settled, how it influenced choices they made, and how

these choices affected their families.

The scriptures, the study aids provided in the scriptures, and the curriculum generally contain sufficient contextual information to assist teachers and students in understanding the scriptural content.

Content [2.4.2]

The content is the story line, people, events, sermons, and inspired explanations that make up the scriptural text. The content of the scriptures gives life and relevance to the doctrines and principles that are found in the

scripture block. For example, the story of Nephi obtaining the brass plates teaches the principle that *faith in the Lord and listening to the Spirit can help individuals overcome what appear to be insurmountable challenges*. Understanding the events of the Exodus makes clear that *trusting in the Lord and following a prophet can lead people and nations to receive the Lord's promised blessings but that blessings are withheld when the people murmur and are disobedient*.

Coming to know the people described in the scriptures can inspire and encourage students to meet the challenges they face and to live with faith. As Elder Richard G. Scott promised of the Book of Mormon:

“Between its covers you will find the friendship and worthy example of Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Benjamin, Alma, Ammon, Helaman, Mormon, Moroni, and so many others. They will rekindle courage and mark the path to faith and obedience. . . .

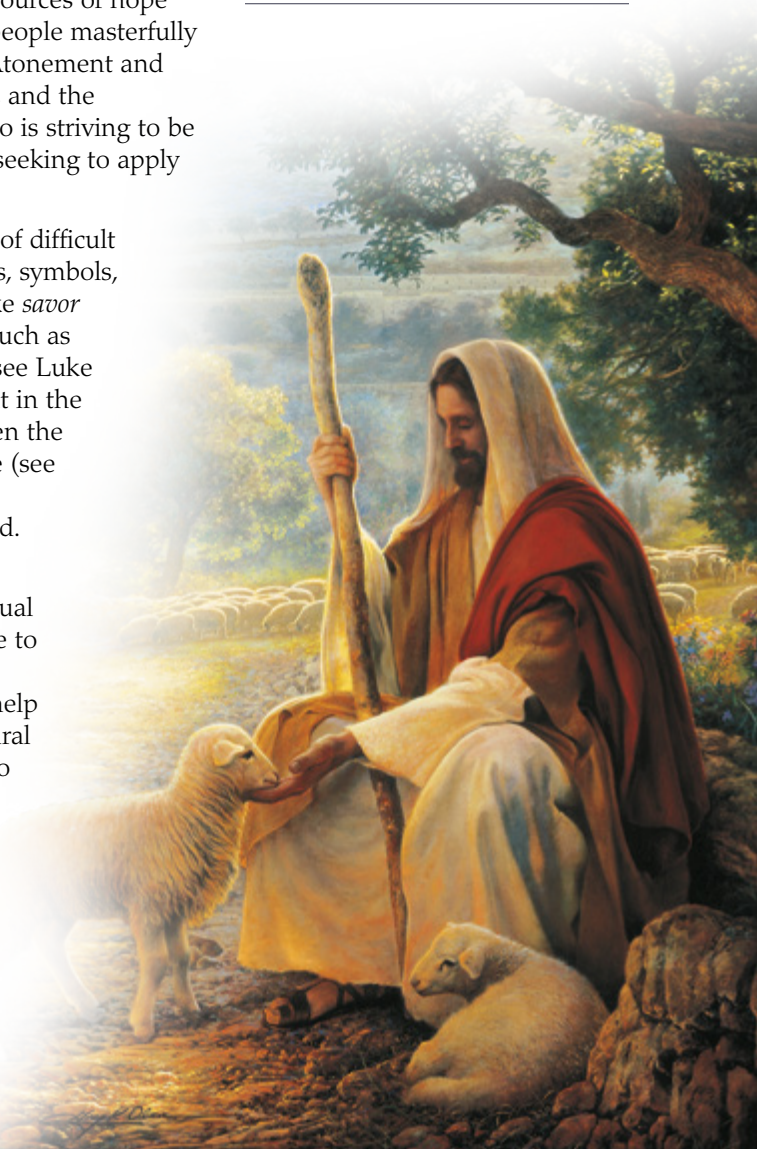
“More important, all of them, without exception, will lift your vision to the perfect friend—our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus the Christ” (“True Friends That Lift,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 77).

The sermons that have so carefully been preserved in the holy scriptures are another very important part of the content. For a student who is struggling with sin, the sermons of Paul or Alma the Younger can be sources of hope and encouragement. King Benjamin's final address to his people masterfully teaches the power and significance of the Savior and His Atonement and clarifies the meaning of service, the blessings of obedience, and the importance of reaching out to those in need. A student who is striving to be a disciple of Jesus Christ can gain insight by studying and seeking to apply the words of the Savior in the Sermon on the Mount.

Part of understanding the content is learning the meaning of difficult words and phrases, as well as the interpretation of parables, symbols, and so on. For example, knowing the meaning of words like *savor* (Matthew 5:13) or *cleave* (D&C 11:19; 45:48) and phrases such as “gird up your loins” (D&C 75:22), and “purse and scrip” (see Luke 10:4) help clarify the text of the scriptures. Principles taught in the parables of the Savior become more easily understood when the symbolic meaning of such things as the pearl of great price (see Matthew 13:45–46), the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:24–30), and the lost sheep (see Luke 15:4–7) is identified.

With all the information that could be learned and taught, teachers should use wisdom in determining how much actual time is devoted to context and content and how much time to spend studying the doctrines and principles of the gospel. Teachers should provide sufficient context and content to help students understand the eternal truths found in the scriptural text, but not overemphasize such background and details to the degree that they become the core of the lesson.

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Identify, Understand, Feel the Truth and Importance of, and Apply Gospel Doctrines and Principles [2.5]

Identifying and understanding gospel doctrines and principles helps teachers and students apply the scriptures and words of the prophets to their own lives and guides them in making decisions. Feeling the truthfulness, importance, and urgency of gospel doctrines and principles often leads to an increased desire to apply what is learned. Applying gospel principles brings promised blessings, deepens understanding and conversion, and helps teachers and students become more like the Savior.

A doctrine is a fundamental, unchanging truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such truths as *Heavenly Father has a body of flesh and bones, baptism is necessary to enter the kingdom of God, and all men will be resurrected* are examples of doctrines.

A principle is an enduring truth or rule individuals can adopt to guide them in making decisions. Gospel principles are universal and help people apply the doctrines of the gospel to everyday living. Elder Richard G. Scott taught, “Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application” (“Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 86). This means that a gospel principle usually suggests action as well as the consequences that follow. For example: *praying always can help us overcome temptation* (see D&C 10:5), and *if we follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, He will help us accomplish what the Lord has commanded* (see 1 Nephi 4).

At times the distinction between a doctrine and a principle can be difficult to discern. Elder Henry B. Eyring shared the following: “I wouldn’t spend a lot of time, by the way, trying to distinguish between a principle and a doctrine. I’ve heard conversations of that kind that weren’t very fruitful” (“Training Guidelines and Resources: Elder Richard G. Scott and Elder Henry B. Eyring Discussion,” [Aug. 2003 CES satellite training broadcast], 10).

Identify Doctrines and Principles [2.5.1]

One of the central purposes of scripture is to teach doctrines and principles of the gospel. President Marion G. Romney explained: “One cannot honestly study the scriptures without learning gospel principles because the scriptures have been written to preserve principles for our benefit” (“The Message of the Old Testament” [CES symposium on the Old Testament, Aug. 17, 1979], 3). Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: “[Principles] are found in the scriptures. They are the substance of and the purpose for the revelations” (“Principles,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1985, 8). In this dispensation, the Lord has commanded teachers and leaders in His Church to teach principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures: “And again, the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel” (D&C 42:12).

Learning how to identify gospel doctrines and principles found in the scriptures takes thoughtful effort and practice. Speaking of this effort, Elder Richard G. Scott said: “Search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them” (“Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” 86).

Sometimes in class, doctrines and principles will be pointed out by the teacher. Other times the teacher will guide, encourage, and allow students to discover them for themselves. Teachers should diligently help students acquire the ability to identify doctrines and principles on their own.

Some gospel doctrines and principles are easier to identify because they are stated overtly. Such *stated principles* are often prefaced by phrases such as “thus we see,” “therefore,” “wherefore,” or “behold,” indicating that the scriptural author may be summarizing his message or drawing a conclusion.

For example, Helaman 3:27 says, “*Thus we may see* that the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name.”

Alma 12:10 states, “*Therefore*, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word.”

Ephesians 6:13 teaches, “*Wherefore* take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Alma 41:10 includes, “*Behold*, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.”

Many principles are not stated directly by the scriptural writer but are instead implied. *Implied principles* may come from an entire book of scripture, a chapter, or a single verse and may be couched in the scriptural story line, events, or parables. Identifying implied principles includes recognizing the truths being illustrated in a scriptural account and stating them clearly and succinctly. This often requires time and careful thought. Elder Richard G. Scott taught, “It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle” (“Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” 86).

Implied principles can often be discovered by looking for cause-and-effect relationships within the scripture block. By analyzing the actions, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals or groups in the scriptural account, and identifying the blessings or consequences that came as a result, gospel principles become more apparent.

Implied principles can also be identified by asking questions like:

- What is the moral or point of the story?
- Why do you think the writer included these events or passages?
- What did the author intend for us to learn?
- What are some of the fundamental truths taught in this passage?

Some examples of implied principles include:

From the events in the lives of Alma the Younger or Paul: *A person who accepts the truth and repents of his sins can lead others to the blessings of the gospel* (see Alma 36:10–21; Acts 9:4–20).

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From the parable of the ten virgins: *If we have faithfully prepared ourselves spiritually, we will be ready when the Lord comes; or those who neglect their spiritual preparation will not be received by the Lord at His coming* (see Matthew 25:1–13).

From the story of David and Goliath: *As we act with courage and faith in God, we can overcome great challenges in our lives* (see 1 Samuel 17:40–51).

Some ways to help students learn to identify principles and doctrines are:

- Invite students to write the concept they are learning in an “if-then” relationship statement.
- Assign students to write “and thus we see” statements to summarize the truths they have learned.
- Have students identify actions that were taken by individuals in the scripture block and search for the blessings or consequences that resulted.
- Encourage students to underline in their scriptures key words or phrases that identify principles and doctrinal statements.
- Write a doctrine or principle from the scripture block on the board. Ask students to search the block, looking for evidence of that principle.

As principles and doctrines are identified, it is important that they are clearly and simply stated. “‘To be known, the truth must be stated and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better the opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true’ [New Witnesses for God, 3 vols. (1909), 2:vii]” (B. H. Roberts, in James E. Faust, “What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves on His Mission,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 41; *Preach My Gospel* [2004], 182).

Writing an identified principle or doctrine on the board, or inviting students to write or underline it in their scriptures, is one way to help make these truths clear in the minds of class members.

Understand Doctrines and Principles [2.5.2]

To understand a gospel doctrine or principle means that students comprehend the identified truths, their relationship with other principles and doctrines in the Lord’s plan, and in what circumstances the principle might be applied in their lives. When a teacher or a student understands a doctrine or principle, they not only know *what the words mean* but also how the doctrine or principle *can affect their lives*. Once a doctrine or principle is identified and understood, it can be more readily applied.

Teachers and students can increase their understanding of gospel doctrines and principles by searching the scriptures for related teachings and additional insights, by turning to the words and teachings of latter-day prophets and apostles, by explaining to others gospel truths they are learning, and by praying for the help of the Holy Ghost. Understanding continues to deepen as principles are applied.

Teachers can help students understand doctrines and principles by asking questions that lead students to analyze their meaning. For example, from the story of the 2,000 stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon, we can learn the principle that *if we do not doubt, God will deliver us* (see Alma 56:47–48). In order to gain a greater understanding of what this principle means, teachers and students could consider such questions as:

- What is it that the stripling warriors did not doubt?
- What evidence is there that these young warriors did not doubt?
- How did God deliver the stripling warriors?
- What are some “battles” the youth of the Church are fighting today?
- What are some ways God might deliver them from such battles?
- What does the experience of Abinadi, Joseph Smith, or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego teach us about what it means to be delivered?

From the story of Naaman and Elisha in the Old Testament, we can learn the principle that *if we are humble and willing to follow the counsel of the prophet, we can be healed* (see 2 Kings 5:1–14). In order to understand what this principle means, teachers and students could consider such questions as:

- How does humility help us follow the counsel of the prophet?
- How does Naaman’s eventual willingness to “wash seven times” help us understand what it means to *truly* follow the counsel of the prophet?
- What things besides physical illness may we need to be healed of today?
- What are some things the prophets have asked us to do that will heal us spiritually but may not make sense to the world?

Feel the Truth and Importance of Doctrines and Principles [2.5.3]

Although students may identify and understand principles and doctrines of the gospel, they will often not apply them until they feel their truth and importance through the Spirit and sense some degree of urgency to incorporate the principle in their own lives. Elder Robert D Hales explained, “A true teacher, once he has taught the facts [of the gospel] . . . , takes [the students] a step further to gain the spiritual witness and the understanding in their hearts that brings about the action and the doing” (“Teaching by Faith” [an evening with Elder Robert D. Hales, Feb. 1, 2002], 5).

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"Our gospel teaching must underscore, as never before, the verity, the relevancy, and the urgency of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This triad of teaching objectives is keenly important because their force will hasten full conversion."

(Neal A. Maxwell, "Those Seedling Saints Who Sit before You" [CES symposium on the Old Testament, Aug. 19, 1983], 2)



The Holy Ghost can impress upon the minds and hearts of the students the significance of a doctrine or principle and can give the students a desire to implement the principle and the strength to do so. Teachers should make every effort to facilitate this experience for each student in their classes. Elder Richard G. Scott encouraged teachers, “Will you pray for guidance in how to have truth sink deep into the minds and hearts of your students so as to be used throughout life? As you prayerfully seek ways to do that, I know that the Lord will guide you” (“To Understand and Live Truth,” [an evening with Elder Richard G. Scott, Feb. 4, 2005], 2).

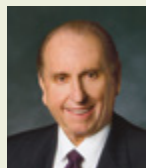
One of the most effective ways to help students invite the influence of the Spirit into their hearts and prepare them to act on the principle they have learned is to encourage them to reflect on personal experiences related to that principle (see section 5.1.3, “Questions That *Invite Feelings and Testimony*” on page 61). This helps students recognize the

impact the principle has had in their lives or in the lives of others. For example, after a discussion on the law of tithing, teachers might ask, “What blessings have you seen in your life or in the lives of others from keeping the law of tithing?” As students reflect on questions like this and share appropriate personal experiences with their class, the Holy Ghost can help them see more clearly the blessings that they and others have received by living gospel doctrines and principles. The Spirit will also help students feel a greater desire to apply these truths in their lives. Teachers can also share true stories from their own lives or the lives of others to help students feel the truth and importance of living the principle being discussed.

Teachers can provide opportunities for students to bear witness of the truthfulness of principles and doctrines. Teachers should also look for opportunities to bear their own testimony. In addition, teachers can help students feel the truth and importance of doctrines and principles by highlighting testimonies expressed by individuals in the scriptures and by reading or listening to the testimonies of latter-day prophets and apostles.

“The goal of gospel teaching . . . is not to ‘pour information’ into the minds of class members. . . . *The aim is to inspire the individual to think about, feel about, and then do something about living gospel principles.*”

(Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 107)



Apply Doctrines and Principles [2.5.4]

Application takes place when students think, speak, and live according to the principles they have learned. Elder Richard G. Scott explained the importance of application when he said, "The best measure of the effectiveness of what occurs in the classroom is to observe that the truths are being understood and applied in a student's life" ("To Understand and Live Truth," 3).

As students apply the principles of the gospel in their lives, they will receive the promised blessings. They will also gain a deeper understanding and testimony of the doctrine or

principle they have applied. For example, students who keep the Sabbath day holy will have a more complete understanding of what that means than students who do not. Students who have trusted in the Lord with all their

heart (see Proverbs 3:5) and have been strengthened and comforted in a time of adversity or trial have a clearer understanding of that principle than those who have not.

Teachers should give students time in class to meditate on, ponder, or write about what they have understood and felt, and to consider what specific actions they should take to apply it in their lives. At such times, teachers should encourage students to ask for guidance and direction from the Lord. Teachers can also discuss situations students might experience and have them share ideas about how applying gospel principles in those situations would bless their lives. They can suggest that students set a goal that can help them live the principle being taught. Teachers could prepare a scripture, quotation, poem, or part of a hymn as a handout that students can take home as a reminder of the principle.

There may be times when the teacher or students in the class offer suggestions as to how gospel principles could be applied. Such examples can give students helpful ideas of ways to apply principles of the gospel in their everyday lives. However, teachers should be careful not to be too prescriptive in assigning specific applications for students. Remember that the most meaningful direction for personal application comes individually through inspiration or revelation from the Lord through the Holy Ghost. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “Teachers who are commanded to teach ‘the principles of [the] gospel’ and ‘the doctrine of the kingdom’ (D&C 88:77) should generally forgo teaching specific rules or applications. . . . Once a teacher has taught the doctrine and the associated principles from the scriptures and the living prophets, such specific applications or rules are generally the responsibility of individuals and families” (“Gospel Teaching,” 79).

Explain, Share, and Testify of Gospel Doctrines and Principles [2.6]

Explaining doctrines and principles, sharing insights and relevant experiences, and testifying of divine truth clarifies a person's understanding of gospel doctrines and principles and improves their ability to teach the gospel to others. As students explain, share, and testify, they are often led by the Holy Ghost to a deeper testimony of the very things they are expressing. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, their words and expressions can also have a significant impact on the hearts and minds of their peers or others who are listening.

Teachers who thoughtfully and prayerfully study, prepare, and teach a lesson tend to learn a great deal. This same principle holds true for students. As they study and teach each other the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel, they will obtain greater understanding and strengthen their testimonies.

[illegible]

Notes

Explain [2.6.1]

Understanding of scripture is increased when students and teachers explain the scriptures to each other. Preparing to clearly and simply tell what a passage of scripture or what a doctrine or principle means encourages teachers and students to ponder the verses, organize their thoughts, and invite the Holy Ghost to teach them.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “We learn to do by doing. If we study the gospel to teach it we have acquired knowledge, for where we carry the lantern to light the path of others we light our own way. As we analyze and arrange the scriptures to present an acceptable lesson to others, we have clarified our own minds. As we explain that which we already know there seems to come to us an unfolding of additional truths, and enlargement of our understandings, new connections and applications” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* [1982], 530).

Giving students the opportunity to explain a doctrine or principle to someone else encourages them to think more deeply and seek greater understanding before teaching others what they have learned. Teachers can ask students to explain why it is important to have faith, be baptized, or obey the law of tithing. Students could be invited to tell someone else about the Creation, the Fall, or why they believe families are central to Heavenly Father's plan. This can take place in pairs or small groups, in role-plays, with the entire class, or in writing. An occasional invitation for students to explain a passage of scripture or teach a doctrine or principle to a parent, a brother or sister, a friend, or a roommate may also be appropriate.



Share [2.6.2]

Both teachers and students should have the opportunity to share their insights and understanding as well as personal experiences they have had with a doctrine or principle. They can also relate experiences they have witnessed in the lives of others.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said: "There is scarcely a youth that comes through your seminary or institute door who has not been the conscious beneficiary of spiritual blessings, or who has not seen the efficacy of prayer, or who has not witnessed the power of faith to heal the sick, or who has not beheld spiritual outpourings of which the world at large is today ignorant" (*The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. [1994], 9). Students should be given the opportunity to share such experiences with the class. (Teachers may need to

help students understand that some experiences are too sacred or personal to share in a classroom setting; see Alma 12:9; D&C 63:64.)

Testify [2.6.3]

Notes

When students have explained gospel principles and shared their experiences in applying them in their lives, they are often better prepared to testify of what they have come to believe.

Elder Boyd K. Packer explained one of the blessings of bearing testimony: “Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be *found* in the *bearing* of it! . . .

“It is one thing to receive a witness from what you have read or what another has said; and that is a necessary beginning. It is quite another to have the Spirit confirm to you in your bosom that what *you* have testified is true” (“The Candle of the Lord,” 54–55).

The sharing of testimony not only blesses the person who bears testimony but can also strengthen the faith and testimonies of others. Testifying gives opportunity for the Holy Ghost to bear witness of specific doctrines and principles of the restored gospel. A testimony does not always begin with the phrase “I’d like to bear my testimony.” It can simply be a statement of what a person knows to be true, spoken with sincerity and conviction. It can be a simple affirmation of how a person feels about a doctrine or principle of the gospel and the difference it has made in his or her life. Students can understand more clearly how gospel principles can be applied and feel more inspired to apply them in their lives when they hear the teacher and other students bear testimony of the value of those principles.

Teachers can encourage students to testify of gospel truths by asking questions that invite them to share their experiences and beliefs (see section 5.1.3, “Questions That Invite Feelings and Testimony” on page 61). They can also provide other opportunities for students to testify to their peers. Teachers should be sensitive to the personal and sacred nature of testimony and can invite but should never require students to share their testimonies. Teachers should take the opportunity to testify often of their own love for Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the truth and value of gospel doctrines and principles. Teachers should be aware of, and refer to, testimonies expressed by the Savior as well as those borne by latter-day prophets and apostles.



“Testimony—real testimony, born of the Spirit and confirmed by the Holy Ghost—changes lives.”

(M. Russell Ballard, “Pure Testimony,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 40)



“Faith promoting incidents occur in teaching when students take a role in teaching and testifying to their peers.”

(Robert D. Hales, “Teaching by Faith,” 4)

Notes

Master Key Scripture Passages and Basic Doctrines [2.7]

As individuals treasure up eternal truths in their minds and hearts, the Holy Ghost will bring these truths to their remembrance in times of need and give them courage to act in faith. President Howard W. Hunter taught:

“I strongly encourage you to use the scriptures in your teaching and to do all within your power to help the students use them and become comfortable with them. I would like our young people to have confidence in the scriptures. . . .

“First, we want the students to have confidence in the strength and truths of the scriptures, confidence that their Heavenly Father is really speaking to them through the scriptures, and confidence that they can turn to the scriptures and find answers to their problems and their prayers. . . .

“. . . We would hope none of your students would leave your classroom fearful or embarrassed or ashamed that they cannot find the help they need because they do not know the scriptures well enough to locate the proper passages” (“Eternal Investments,” 2).

To help students treasure up eternal truths and to increase their confidence in the scriptures, S&I has selected a number of scripture mastery passages and prepared a list of Basic Doctrines. The study of the scripture mastery passages and these doctrines should be developed together so that students will learn to express these doctrines in their own words and use the scripture mastery passages to help them explain and testify of these truths.

Scripture Mastery [2.7.1]

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion has selected 25 scripture mastery passages for each of the four seminary courses. These passages provide an important scriptural foundation for understanding and sharing the gospel and for strengthening faith. Seminary students are encouraged to develop a “mastery” of these passages as described below. Institute students should be encouraged to build upon the foundation of these 100 scripture mastery passages and develop a depth of understanding of other key passages of scripture.

Mastery of scripture passages includes:

- **Locating** the verses by knowing the associated scriptural references.
- **Understanding** the context and content of the scripture passages.
- **Applying** the gospel principles and doctrines taught in the scripture passages.
- **Memorizing** the passages.

Memorization can be a wonderful tool to help students know and love selected passages of scripture. As Elder Richard G. Scott explained, “When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased” (“He Lives,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 88). Care should be taken, however, to tailor expectations to each student’s capabilities and circumstances. Students should not be made to feel embarrassed or overwhelmed if they are unable to memorize.

Teachers will be better able to help their students if they master these passages themselves. When teachers refer to scripture mastery passages with consistency, maintain appropriate expectations, and use methods that appeal to different learning styles, they will be more successful in helping students to master these key passages. During lessons, scripture mastery passages should be used to clarify related doctrines and principles. They may be used as the theme for devotionals or displayed somewhere in the classroom. Students should also be encouraged to study and apply them outside of class.

In locations where multiple teachers serve together on a faculty, student learning will be enhanced when faculty members take a unified approach to scripture mastery. Periodically teachers may choose to review scripture mastery references from previous years so that students can maintain mastery of all of the selected passages.

While scripture mastery is an important part of the curriculum, it should supplement, not overshadow, daily sequential study of the scriptures. Teachers should be wise in the time they allot to scripture mastery. Home-study teachers must be particularly careful that the weekly class does not become a weekly scripture mastery activity. Teachers should choose methods, activities, and music that are in keeping with the dignity, purpose, and spirit of the scriptures and that avoid contention.

Basic Doctrines [2.7.2]

The Basic Doctrines have been identified to be highlighted in both seminary and institute classes. Teachers are to help students identify, understand, believe, explain, and apply these doctrines of the gospel. Doing so will help students strengthen their testimonies and increase their appreciation for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. A study of these doctrines will also help them be better prepared to teach these important truths to others.

It is important to remember that other significant doctrines of the gospel will also be taught, even though they are not listed in the Basic Doctrines.



“Great power can come from memorizing scriptures. To memorize a scripture is to forge a new friendship. It is like discovering a new individual who can help in time of need, give inspiration and comfort, and be a source of motivation for needed change.”

(Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” 6)



Notes

The Basic Doctrines selected by Seminaries and Institutes of Religion are:

- Godhead
- Plan of salvation
- Atonement of Jesus Christ
- Dispensation, Apostasy, and Restoration
- Prophets and revelation
- Priesthood and priesthood keys
- Ordinances and covenants
- Marriage and family
- Commandments

As teachers personally study and understand these doctrines, they will more naturally refer to and bear testimony of them as they teach. However, they should not divert from teaching the scriptures sequentially to focus solely on these doctrines. Rather, teachers should give careful and consistent attention to these doctrines as they appear naturally in the scriptural text and the courses of study. In this way, the list of Basic Doctrines serves as a reminder to focus on those eternal truths that will be of most worth to the students and to emphasize them throughout the course of study. These Basic Doctrines may also be used as themes for devotionals.

A wise teacher will also remember that patience and consistency are important in helping students understand these doctrines. It is not expected that a student will come to completely understand everything at once. The Lord teaches His children “line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12). Teachers and students should see the understanding of these doctrines as a process occurring over the four years of seminary and continuing during the years in institute.



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Teaching the Scriptures in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

To help the youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, teachers in seminary and institute are charged with teaching students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures. To accomplish this, the S&I administration has determined that in seminary and institute scripture courses, the books and chapters of scripture should be taught in the sequence they appear in the standard works. While this does not mean that every verse must be taught in the exact order it appears, each lesson will generally follow the story line or natural flow of the verses. Studying the scriptures in this way provides the basis for understanding the full scope of the message the inspired writer intended to convey, and allows principles and doctrines of the gospel to be studied as they emerge from and are illustrated by the scriptural text.

Studying the scriptures sequentially:

- Allows teachers and students to study gospel truths in harmony with one another as well as in relationship to other content within the scriptures. This enables teachers and students to see and understand with clarity and power the inspired messages in the scriptures.
- Provides for the proper emphasis and repetition of the doctrines and principles of the gospel as they are found in the scriptures.
- Helps students and teachers identify “cause-and-effect” relationships more easily.
- Assists students in discovering and understanding multiple gospel principles, even when they may not be discussed in detail during the lesson. For individual students, these truths can be brought to light by the Holy Ghost and then tailored to fit their own unique circumstances.
- Allows teachers and students to study and discuss the doctrines and principles of the gospel in the context of the lives and experiences of those who lived in the past. This helps students to more easily see these principles and doctrines in the context of their own lives.
- Helps establish a degree of familiarity with each of the standard works in their entirety.



Elder David A. Bednar taught that reading a book of scripture “from beginning to end initiates the flow of living water into our lives by introducing us to important stories, gospel doctrines, and timeless principles. This approach also enables us to learn about major characters in the scriptures and the sequence, timing, and context of events and teachings. Reading the written word in this way exposes us to the breadth of a volume of scripture. This is the first and most fundamental way of obtaining living water” (“A Reservoir of Living Water” [CES fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007], 2).

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Incorporating Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning [3.1]

Each scripture-based lesson in seminary or institute focuses on a scripture block rather than on a particular concept, doctrine, or principle. The curriculum divides the scriptures into these scripture blocks, which may be as little as one chapter (or section), or as broad as an entire book of scripture. Most scripture blocks contain natural breaks where a change in action or topic occurs. Based on these changes, the scripture block is divided into smaller segments or groups of verses. Organizing the study of the entire scripture block into these smaller segments provides a framework for understanding and teaching the message of the inspired author.

As teachers and students study these segments of the scripture block sequentially, they incorporate many of the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning. Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning, such as understanding the context and content, identifying, understanding, and feeling the truth and importance of and applying gospel doctrines and principles, are not methods but are outcomes to be achieved. These fundamentals work in harmony with each other and establish a basic pattern that teachers and students can follow to instill the gospel within their minds and hearts. This pattern is described as follows:

1. Understand the Context and Content. Helping students understand the context and content of a scripture block is the foundational step in the process of teaching the scriptures. An understanding of such information as background and story line creates a basis for discovering gospel principles and doctrines as well as providing illustration and clarification of those truths found within the scripture block. The clarity and the depth of understanding provided by this foundation is often diminished or lost when only a verse or two of a scripture block is taught.

2. Identify Doctrines and Principles. An understanding of the content of the scriptures prepares students and teachers to identify principles and doctrines found within the scripture block. Sometimes a scriptural author will directly state the principle or doctrine they wish to convey. Other times those truths are simply implied as they are portrayed within the scriptural account, creating a need to express the gospel teaching in a simple statement of truth.



*Notes***3. Understand the Meaning of Those Doctrines and Principles.**

Once principles and doctrines have been identified, students and teachers seek to gain a better understanding of those truths by analyzing and discussing their meaning. Often the scripture block itself contains clarifying commentary that can help students grasp the meaning of a statement of doctrine or principle. In addition, likening the scriptures to a modern context helps students better understand what the principles and doctrines mean for their lives. As students' understanding of a doctrine or principle develops, having the opportunity to explain the gospel truth to others helps fortify and further crystallize their own understanding.

4. Feel the Truth and Importance of the Principle or Doctrine through the Influence of the Spirit. A clear understanding of a principle or doctrine prepares students to feel its truth and importance. When students feel the truth, importance, and urgency of the principle or doctrine through the influence of the Spirit, their desire to apply that truth in their lives grows. Teachers can help students to invite and nurture these feelings of the Spirit by giving them opportunities to share experiences they have had in living a gospel principle and to testify of its truthfulness. Teachers can also share their own testimony and experiences. In many instances, the scriptural author also bears testimony of the principle or doctrine being taught. Teachers and students should look for these confirming witnesses within the verses of the scripture block.

5. Apply Doctrines and Principles. A feeling of the truth and importance of a doctrine or principle opens the doorway for a student to apply it to his or her life. Although personal application of gospel principles most often takes place outside of a class setting, there are important things that can happen during the lesson that help increase students' commitment and ability to apply what they are learning in a meaningful way. Teachers can give students opportunities to ponder their own situation and to consider specific ways they can apply the principle or doctrine. As students are given time to reflect and consider how to personalize the principle for their own life, the Spirit can bring individual direction to their minds. When appropriate, teachers can invite students to share ideas of how they could apply the principle in the future.

This basic pattern is repeated in full or in part throughout the lesson as teachers and students study each group of verses in the scripture block.

Some segments of a scripture block will be emphasized during the lesson, while others may be given less attention because they are less central to the overall message of the inspired author or the particular needs of the students. For some segments, much time and effort will be allocated for the understanding of context and content, for discovering principles and doctrines of the gospel, and for teachers to continue guiding students through the entire process of understanding, feeling the truth and importance of, and seeking to apply the principle.

In other instances, the context and content will be studied and understood sufficiently for a principle or doctrine to be identified before moving to the next segment of the scripture block. As teachers or students briefly mention a doctrine or principle when it becomes evident in the text, it provides opportunities for the Holy Ghost to teach and personalize gospel truths needed by individual students, even though these truths may not be discussed at length as part of the lesson.

For yet other segments, teachers and students may study only the context and content, or teachers may merely summarize the story line or content before moving on to the next group of verses. *Summarizing* means to briefly tell what is contained in chapters or verses that are not emphasized in class. Summarizing allows a teacher to move quickly through portions of the scripture block. By summarizing segments of the scripture block rather than omitting them, teachers help students keep the story line and context clear in their minds and provide a foundation for discovering and understanding principles or doctrines that will arise later in the block. Summarizing also helps preserve the integrity and flow of the inspired author's message.

As teachers and students progress sequentially through each segment of the scripture block in this manner, they can better understand how one group of verses relates to the others. Seeing the relationship among the various parts of the scripture block helps teachers and students not only understand the individual doctrines and principles on a deeper level, but also helps them perceive the broader view of what the scriptures are teaching.

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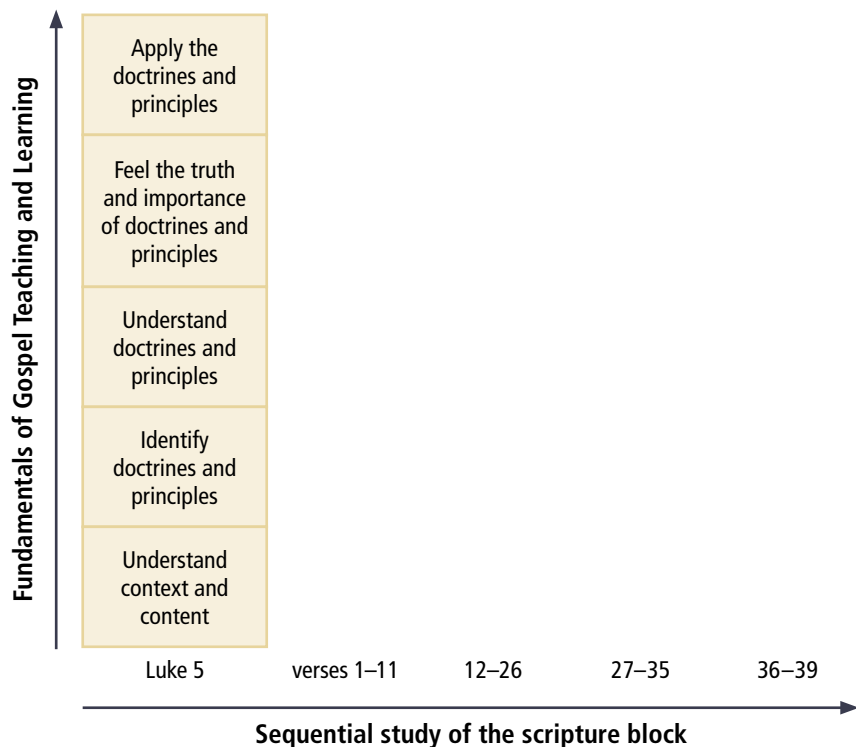
Luke 5: An Example [3.2]

The following example demonstrates how a teacher might teach a scripture block incorporating the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning.

The scripture block in this example, Luke 5, could be divided into smaller groups of verses or segments based on changes in the story line or topic:

- Luke 5:1–11 After miraculously catching a multitude of fishes, Peter, James, and John are called by the Lord to be fishers of men.
- Luke 5:12–26 Jesus heals several individuals with physical infirmities and forgives sins.
- Luke 5:27–35 Jesus eats with publicans and sinners, causing the scribes and Pharisees to question Him.
- Luke 5:36–39 Jesus gives the parable of new wine in old bottles.

The following chart will be used to illustrate the progression of this sample lesson through each of these segments. It will also depict the extent to which the teacher plans to incorporate the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning in each group of verses.



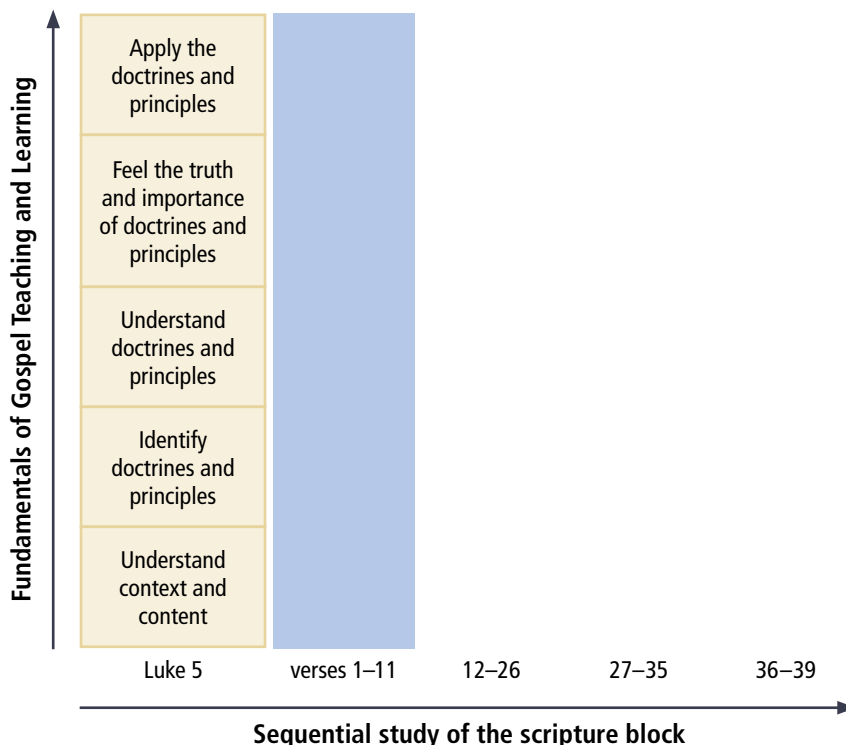
Verses 1–11

After miraculously catching a multitude of fishes, Peter, James, and John were called by the Lord to be fishers of men.

The teacher would begin by helping students **understand the context and content** of Luke 5:1–11. As they study these verses, students would learn that Jesus asked Peter to “launch out into the deep, and let down [his] nets for a draught [catch]” (verse 4). They would see that despite having fished all night and “taken nothing” (verse 5), Peter obeyed the Lord and to his astonishment caught a multitude of fish. From Peter’s experience, students could **identify the principle**: *If we do what the Lord asks even when we don’t understand why, He can provide greater blessings than we anticipate.* The teacher could then help students better **understand this principle** and what it means to them by discussing with them how Peter’s experience could be like circumstances in their own lives or by sharing a related statement from a latter-day prophet or apostle.

In these verses, the teacher’s desire is not only to help students identify and understand this important principle, but also to help them **feel of its truth and importance** through the influence of the Spirit. To do so, the teacher could ask students to share how they have been blessed by responding to the Lord’s direction even when they did not fully see the reasons for it. As students and the teacher testify of how they have seen evidence of this principle in their lives, the Spirit can testify of its truth and inspire them to act. The teacher could then give students a few minutes to reflect on and write down how they could **apply** this principle.

The chart now reflects which Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning were implemented in this segment of verses.



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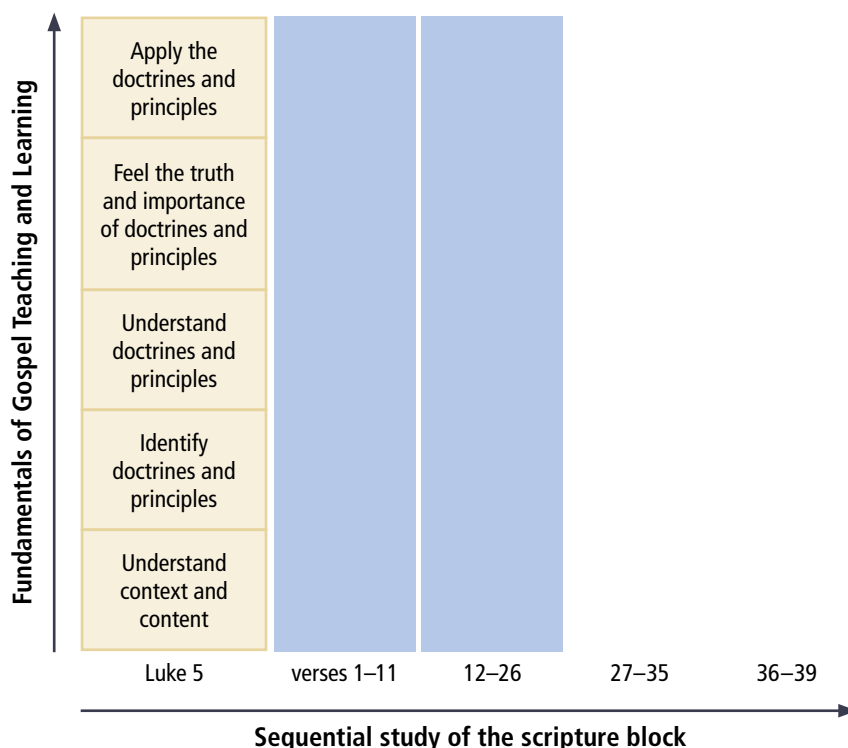
Verses 12–26

Jesus healed several individuals with physical infirmities and forgave sins.

To help students **understand the content** of these verses, the teacher would have them first become acquainted with the story line of the leper and the paralytic being healed by the Lord. To deepen their understanding of the content, the teacher could have students analyze how these two healings are similar and how they are different. To help them do this the teacher might have them consider the role that faith played in both healings. After discovering that faith was necessary in both instances, students could **identify the principle**: *As we exercise faith and come to the Savior, He can heal us.* By analyzing the differences between the two accounts, students would notice that while the leper came to the Lord on his own, the man who was paralyzed needed the help of others. From this students could identify an additional principle: *We can help others come to the Savior so that they can be healed.*

The teacher could help students **understand these principles** by asking them to describe things besides physical infirmities that people can be healed of. The discussion could help students understand that the physical healings in these verses can symbolize the Lord's ability to heal us spiritually. This could include such things as forgiving our sins, comforting us in sorrow, or calming our fears or anxieties.

In order to help students **feel the truth and importance of these principles**, the teacher could ask students to share an experience when they or someone they know has been healed spiritually or physically. Students could also be asked to share examples of when they have seen a person bring someone else to the Lord to receive the Savior's healing influence.



(When students share such examples, they should be reminded not to give the names of the people involved.) The teacher may invite students to testify of the Savior's love and His power to heal us.

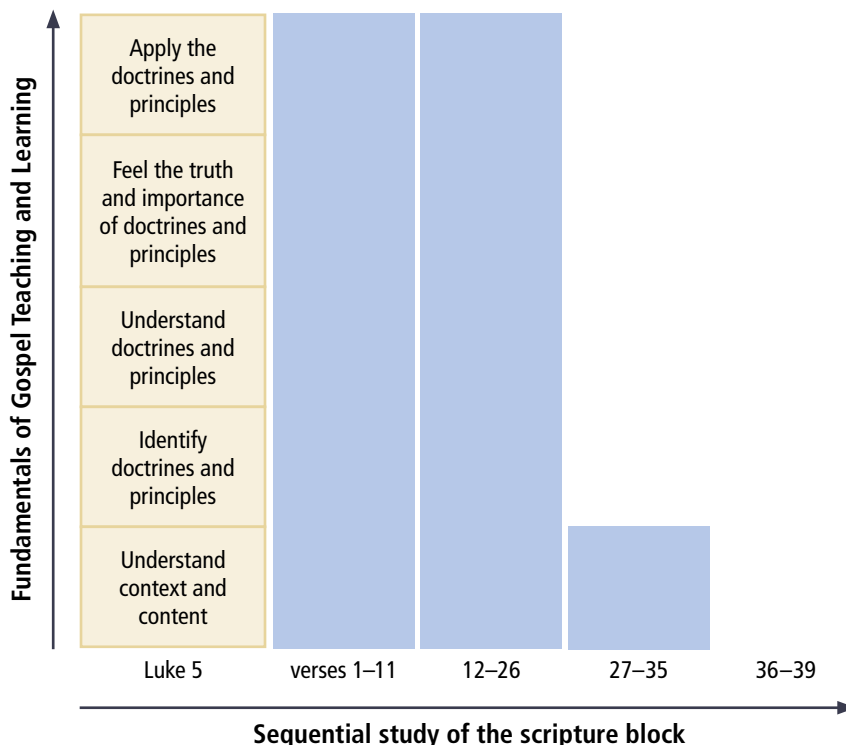
To encourage **application**, the teacher would then have students think of something specific they could do to exercise faith to be healed, forgiven, or comforted, or ways they might bring a friend or someone else to the Savior.

Before moving on to verses 27–35, the teacher might ask the students to share what they have learned about the Savior from these verses. Responses to this invitation could elicit feelings of gratitude and recognition of the Savior's compassion.

Verses 27–35

Jesus ate with publicans and sinners, causing the scribes and Pharisees to question Him.

In this segment the teacher plans only to help students **understand the context and content**. In studying these verses students would learn about the call of the publican Levi, or Matthew, and about Jesus eating with the publicans and sinners (content). The teacher might help the students understand that the publicans were viewed as outcasts and sinners by the Jews (context). This context would help students understand the significance of Matthew's future call to become the Lord's disciple. It would also give added meaning to the exchange that occurred in these verses between the Pharisees and the Lord concerning His "eat[ing] and drink[ing] with publicans and sinners" and His mission to help the sinners repent (see verses 30–32).



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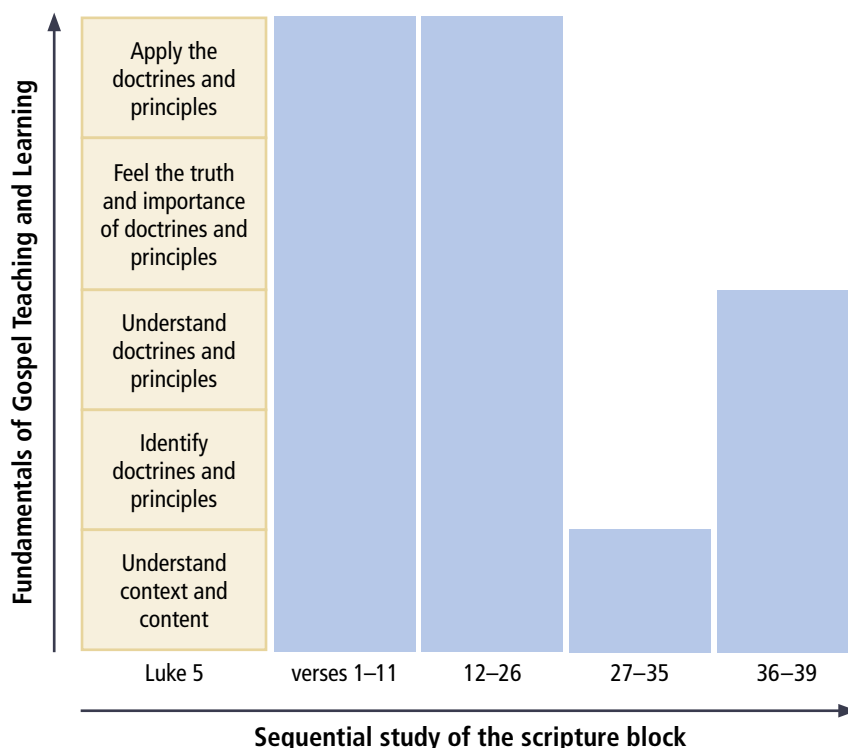
Verses 36–39

Jesus gave the parable of new wine in old bottles.

To help students **understand the context and content** of this parable, the teacher could refer them to the footnote in verse 37 (which explains that the bottles are leather bags or wineskins) and discuss the difference between new leather that is soft and pliable and leather that has become hard and brittle. The teacher could then explain that Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees (context), and that the “old garment” and the “old bottles” in this parable represent the Pharisees who were unwilling to change and accept the doctrine of Christ. The teacher could also point out that the “new cloth” and the “new bottles” represent those people who were willing to change and accept the Savior and His teachings.

The teacher could then ask the students to **identify a principle** based on this parable. One possible truth students may identify is: *To accept the Savior and His gospel, we must be humble and willing to change.* The teacher might then have students review the chapter, looking for examples where individuals were hardened and unyielding in their attitude toward the Savior and His teachings, as well as for examples where individuals were humble and willing to change. This activity would help students better **understand this principle**.

The teacher could conclude the lesson by inviting students to share any additional insights or impressions they have gained through their study of Luke 5. The teacher might also testify of the truths that have been taught and encourage students to act upon the principles and doctrines they have discovered.



Preparing to Teach

Personal Preparation [4.1]

Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “Power comes when a teacher has done all that he can to prepare, not just the individual lesson, but in keeping his life in tune with the Spirit. If he will learn to rely on the Spirit for inspiration, he can go before his class . . . secure in the knowledge that he can teach with inspiration” (*Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. [1991], 358–59).

The most important and fundamental part of a gospel teacher’s preparation is to prepare himself or herself spiritually. Some important considerations in such preparation are living the gospel, praying for help and guidance, exercising faith, and participating in inservice training.

Live the Gospel [4.1.1]

How faithfully teachers live the gospel influences every aspect of their teaching. No greater preparation can occur than that of living a life worthy of the guiding, enabling companionship of the Holy Ghost (see section 1.2, “Live” on page 2).

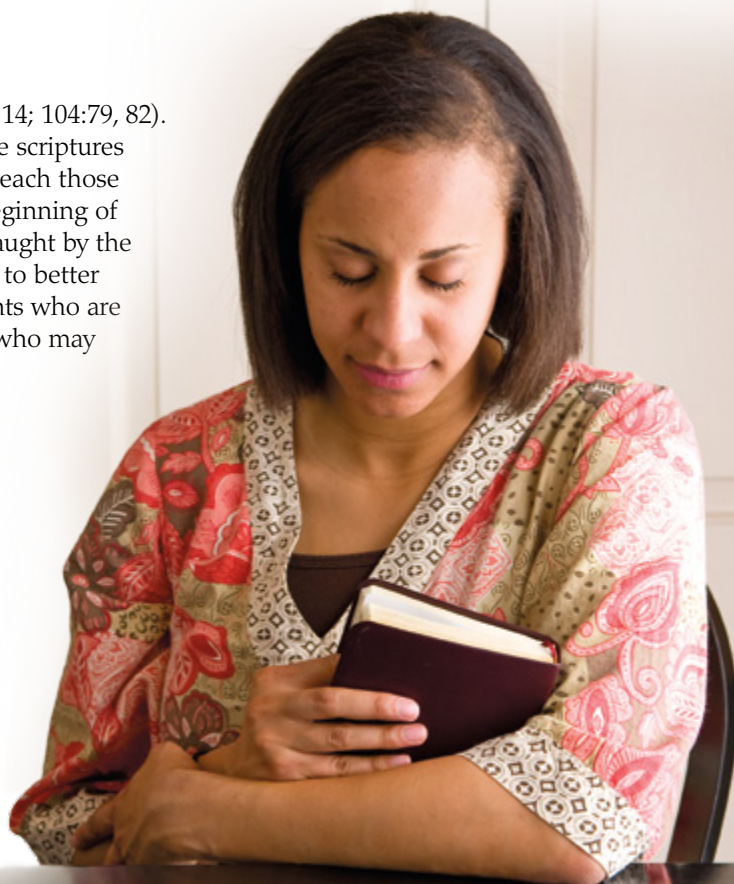
Pray for Help and Guidance [4.1.2]

Prayer is an integral part of preparing to teach (see D&C 42:14; 104:79, 82). A teacher can pray for the Spirit’s help in understanding the scriptures and gospel principles, for wisdom in deciding how to best teach those principles by the Spirit, for help and guidance before the beginning of each class, and for the students’ willingness to feel and be taught by the Spirit. Teachers can ask the Lord for the gift of discernment to better understand each student, for help to reach individual students who are struggling, and for the gift of charity to love those students who may be more difficult to love (see Moroni 7:48).

Exercise Faith [4.1.3]

The “teach” paragraph in the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes implies that an effective teacher should have confidence in the power of the word of God, faith in the Lord and the Holy Ghost, and trust in the students. When teachers are not successful, it is often because one of these elements is lacking.

Confidence in the power of the word. Teachers may be tempted to believe that students will not like studying the scriptures, or that they cannot teach the scriptures day after day and maintain the students’ interest. Teachers should remember, however, that the scriptures contain



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“the words of life” (D&C 84:85) and that the word has a “more powerful effect” upon the mind “than the sword, or anything else” (Alma 31:5).

Elder Henry B. Eyring said: “I beg of you, for yourselves and for the students, to have faith that they will want to read [the scriptures], not that you must drive them to it, but that it will draw them to it. . . . The Lord wrote the book. He showed Nephi how to do it in such a way that it would draw you. And, it will draw your students” (“The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life” [CES symposium on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 17, 1990], 2).

Faith in the Lord and in the Spirit. The responsibility to teach the principles of the gospel to the youth and young adults can feel challenging and overwhelming. But it is the Lord’s work: He will help those who turn to Him in faith. Mormon taught, “And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33).

Teachers should have faith that the Lord understands the needs of every student and wants to bless them. Teachers should believe that the Holy Ghost will carry the gospel message to each student and prompt application of gospel principles according to their needs and circumstances. A teacher should remember that it is “the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth” (D&C 50:14).



Trust in the students. Teachers should have faith that with proper guidance and encouragement, students can understand the scriptures, learn to identify doctrines and principles, explain the gospel to others, and apply gospel teachings in their lives. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. described some characteristics of seminary and institute students:

“The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. . . .

“ . . . You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in his ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with him. You do not need to disguise religious truths with a cloak of worldly things; you can bring these truths to him openly” (*The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. [1994], 3, 9).

At times, students’ appearance, behavior, or response to gospel learning may seem to indicate that they are not “hungry for things of the Spirit.” It is especially important under these circumstances for teachers to exercise faith in President Clark’s teachings. Elder Henry B. Eyring offered this reassuring promise: “Our students may not know that they are fainting from famine, but the words of God will slake a thirst they did not know they had, and the Holy Ghost will take it down into their hearts” (“We Must Raise Our Sights” [CES conference on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 14, 2001], 3).

A teacher seeking to fulfill the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes by exercising faith in the power of the word, in the Lord and the Holy Ghost, and in the students should consistently ask:

Does my teaching:

1. Promote a deepened understanding of and love for the word of God?
2. Invite the Holy Ghost and lead to edification?
3. Encourage each student to personally learn and live the gospel in faith?
4. Help my students to better know, love, and follow Jesus Christ?

Participate in Inservice Training [4.1.4]

Seminaries and institutes provides inservice training opportunities for all of its teachers and leaders. Inservice training is primarily intended to improve teaching, increase gospel knowledge, and help teachers learn how to administer in seminaries and institutes.

One facet of this training is formal inservice meetings. Inservice training meetings are held on a regular basis, and teachers and leaders are expected to attend. During these meetings, participants study and discuss the scriptures to deepen their understanding. They learn and practice inspiring methods of teaching. They also share ideas for increasing student enrollment, attendance, and completion; counsel together about current needs; and learn how to fulfill administrative responsibilities.

Another facet of inservice training involves classroom visits and observations. Teachers can benefit greatly from inviting a coordinator, principal, or fellow teacher to observe their teaching and give helpful feedback. Often an observer can be asked to give specific feedback on a particular teaching skill a teacher is striving to develop. Where opportunity exists, a teacher may also benefit from observing other teachers.

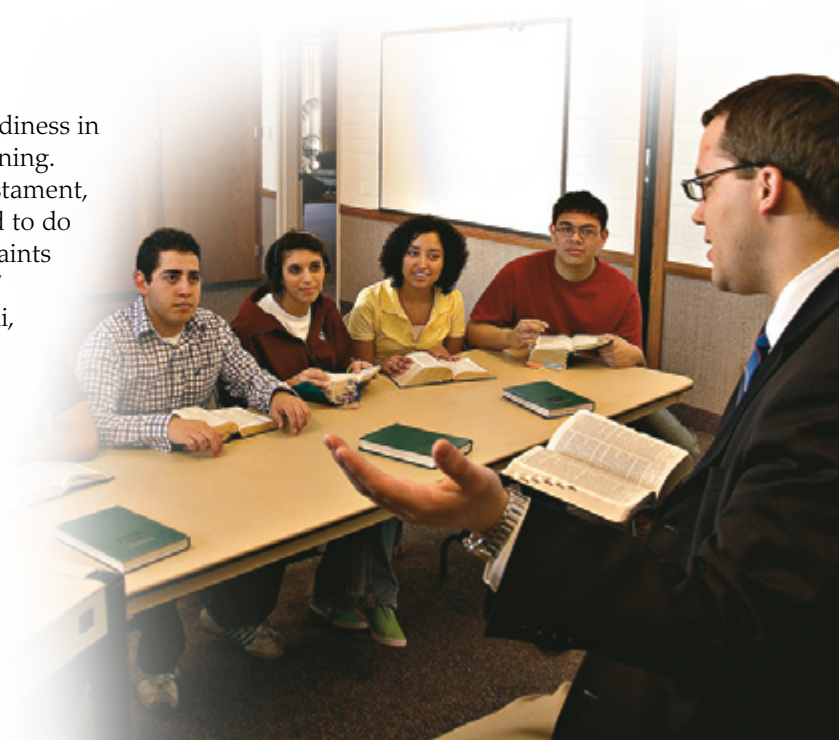
Those who approach inservice training in faith and with a sincere desire to learn and improve will experience steady growth and development.

Student Preparation [4.2]

The scriptures speak of a state of preparation or readiness in the hearts and minds of those seeking spiritual learning. For example, Ezra, a priest and scribe in the Old Testament, “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it” (Ezra 7:10). The book of Acts describes faithful Saints who “received the word with all readiness of mind” (Acts 17:11). During His visit to the people of Nephi, the Savior encouraged them: “Prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again” (3 Nephi 17:3).

In order for students to feel the edifying influence of the Holy Ghost in their learning experience, they too should be “in a preparation to hear the word” (Alma 32:6). In the classroom, students are ready to learn when their minds are alert, when

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their attention is focused on the learning experience, and when they manifest a willingness to be taught by the Spirit. Among the many things a teacher can do to help students prepare their hearts and minds for gospel learning are the following:

Pray for students. Teachers can plead for the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon their students “to prepare their hearts to receive the word . . . with joy” (Alma 16:16–17).

Foster a climate of love and respect. Students who feel loved, trusted, and valued by their teacher and the other students will come to class more open to the influence of the Spirit and with a stronger desire to participate.

Establish a sense of purpose. Teachers should help students understand that they are attending class to come to know Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and progress toward eternal life through a study of His gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets.

Present interesting, relevant, and edifying lessons. When teachers prepare and present edifying lessons on a consistent basis, students develop an expectation that they will learn something of value each time they attend class. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: “If you are teaching a class . . . , [students] will not return with any enthusiasm unless they are being taught something. They must learn something to want to return. They will come willingly, even eagerly, to a class . . . in which they are fed” (*Teach Ye Diligently*, 182).

Invite the Holy Ghost at the beginning of class. Often a well-prepared, student-led devotional that includes a prayer, the singing of a hymn, and a thought from the scriptures invites the Spirit, unites the students, and prepares their minds and hearts for spiritual learning.

Capture and maintain the students’ interest. Teachers can help focus the students’ minds on the learning experience by beginning each lesson in a way that captures the students’ attention and leads them to search the scriptures with greater purpose. For example, a teacher could have an intriguing question written on the board or display an object or picture that triggers student interest as they come to class.

Because many students have a limited attention span, the wise teacher looks for ways to rekindle their interest and enthusiasm several times during the class. This should be done in a way that focuses the students’ attention on the scriptures to be studied.

Prepare students to be successful learners. Before inviting students to participate, teachers should clearly explain what will be asked of them, provide an example, give students time to prepare and practice, and then give encouragement and recognize students’ efforts to fulfill their role in the learning process. Teachers who prepare students to fulfill their role as learners will find much greater success in fulfilling the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes.

Lesson Preparation [4.3]

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Sources for Lesson Preparation [4.3.1]

Scriptures

All four of the seminary courses and most of the approved institute courses consist of a study of the standard works. The primary source for determining what to teach in these courses is the scriptures themselves. In an address to seminary and institute teachers, President Ezra Taft Benson taught, “Always remember, there is no satisfactory substitute for the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. These should be your original sources” (“The Gospel Teacher and His Message” [address to CES religious educators, Sept. 17, 1976], 3).

Some institute courses focus on gospel topics rather than on a study of the standard works. Teachers of these courses should consider the material suggested in the institute curriculum (as well as the scriptures) as their primary sources for preparation. Teachers should consistently look for opportunities to use the scriptures and words of the prophets to clarify and illustrate the doctrines and principles taught in these courses.

Seminary and institute curriculum

Seminary and institute curriculum materials have been provided as the main resource to help teachers prepare and teach effective lessons. The curriculum provides background information about the scriptures and their context, explanations of difficult words and phrases, General Authority comments on the doctrines and principles taught in the scriptures, and suggestions for what content, doctrines, and principles to teach. It also suggests ideas for how to teach. As teachers use the curriculum in tandem with their study of the scripture block, the Holy Ghost can inspire them as they personalize the lesson for the needs of their students.

Elder Henry B. Eyring gave an explanation concerning the preparation and use of the curriculum: “Those called by the prophet to assure the correctness of doctrine taught in the Church review every word, every picture, every diagram in that curriculum which you receive. We can unlock the power of the curriculum simply by acting on our faith that it is inspired of God. . . .

“Sticking with the content of the curriculum as well as its sequence will unlock our unique teaching gifts, not stifle them” (“The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest” [an evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 6, 1998], 4–5).

Additional resources

Teachers may use additional resources such as Church magazines, especially teachings from general conference, as they contribute to a clearer understanding of the scripture block. Other resources should not be used to speculate, sensationalize, or teach ideas that have not been clearly established by the Church. Even if something has been verified or published before, it still may not be appropriate for use in the classroom. Lessons should build students’ faith and testimony.



Notes

Decide What to Teach and How to Teach It [4.3.2]

When preparing a lesson, every teacher must decide: “What will I teach?” and “How will I teach it?” *What to teach* consists of the context (including background, culture, and setting), content (such as story line, people, events, sermons, and inspired explanations), and important gospel truths that exist within the scripture block. *How to teach* consists of the methods, approaches, and activities a teacher uses to help students learn (such as class discussion, audiovisual resources, writing exercises, and small group work). Deciding *what to teach* needs to precede choosing *how to teach* so that the primary focus remains on the scriptures, rather than on methods or techniques.

During lesson preparation, teachers should give sufficient time and effort in deciding both *what to teach* and *how to teach*. If *what to teach* gets almost all of the emphasis during lesson preparation, a teacher will not have sufficient time to consider how to help students participate in learning. Often this will result in lessons that are boring and too teacher-centered. When a teacher focuses too heavily on *how to teach*, lessons can become disjointed, lacking purpose and power.

Decide What to Teach [4.3.3]

There are four fundamental stages teachers go through as they prepare what they will teach: First, they seek to understand the context and content of the scripture block. Second, they identify and understand the doctrines and principles found in the block. Third, they decide which principles are most important for their students to learn and apply, and fourth, they decide what level of emphasis to give each segment of the scripture block.

1. Understand the context and content of the scripture block being taught.

Teachers should seek to understand the context, or background, of the scripture block and to immerse themselves in that block of scripture until the content becomes familiar. To immerse oneself in the scriptures means to read, study, ponder, and pray for inspiration and understanding about what one reads.

One of the most helpful things a teacher can do to understand the scriptural content is to note natural breaks in the scripture block where a change in topic or action occurs. Using the curriculum and their own insights, teachers can then divide the scripture block into smaller segments or groups of verses based on these natural breaks. These smaller segments will become important building blocks or components that teachers will use later in their preparation to organize the flow of their lesson and to enable them to give at least some attention to all of the content within a scripture block.

While outlining the scripture block in this way, teachers should also seek to develop their understanding of the people, places, events, and cause-and-effect relationships that seem important, as well as the meaning of difficult words or phrases. Obtaining sufficient understanding of the content often requires reading the scripture block more than once.

2. Identify and understand doctrines and principles.

Along with understanding the context and content, teachers should carefully identify and understand the doctrines and principles in the scripture block and review those suggested in the curriculum. Unless the curriculum has already done so, a teacher should make the effort to write out the doctrines and principles in clear, succinct statements. Doing so helps crystallize both the principles and their meanings in the teacher's mind. This will also help guide the learning activities during the class and allow for increased understanding and more focused application by the students.

3. Decide which principles and doctrines are most important for students to learn and apply.

In a normal scripture block there will almost always be more material than can be meaningfully discussed in a class period. Once teachers have studied the scriptures and the curriculum, they need to decide which doctrines and principles are the most important for their students to understand and apply. In making this decision, teachers should consider the following:

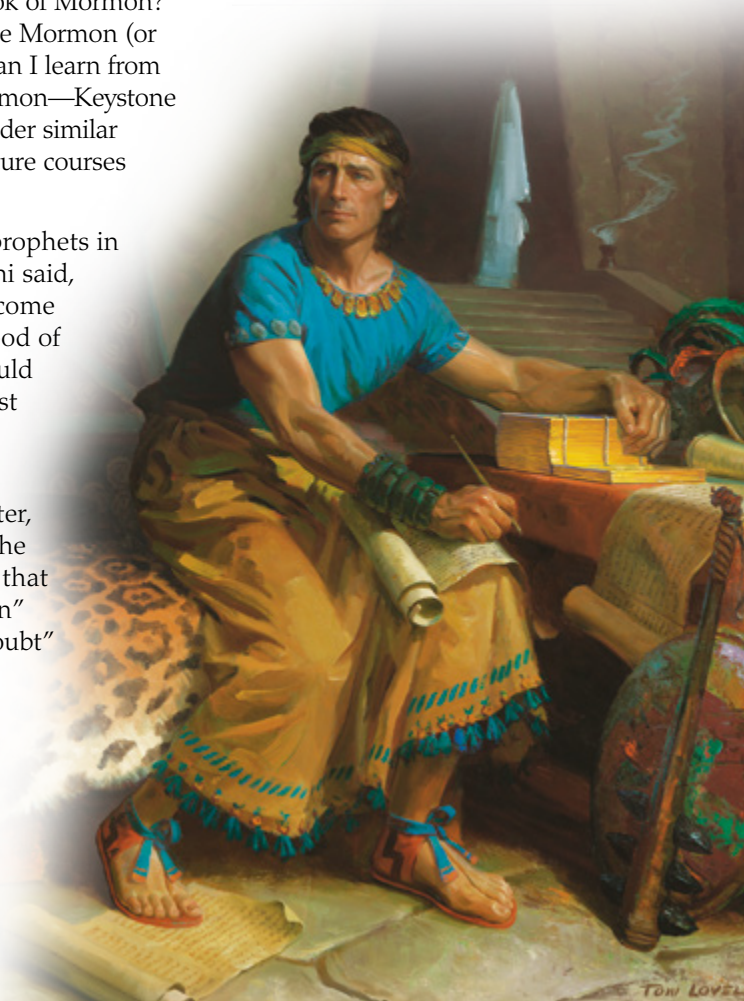
Promptings of the Holy Ghost. In deciding what principles and doctrines to emphasize in the lesson, teachers should continually seek direction from the Holy Ghost.

The intent of the inspired author. Teachers should seek to determine what the prophetic writer desired to communicate. President Ezra Taft Benson said: “If they [the writers] saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, ‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?’” (“The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 6). Teachers should consider similar questions during their lesson preparation for any of the scripture courses they teach.

Teachers should also keep in mind that a central intent of prophets in scripture has always been to testify of Jesus Christ. As Nephi said, “The fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved” (1 Nephi 6:4). Therefore, a teacher should ask, “What does this scripture block teach about Jesus Christ that would help my students understand and rely on His teachings and Atonement?”

As teachers seek to determine the intent of the inspired writer, they should be careful not to go beyond what is evident in the text. Elder Henry B. Eyring cautioned, "I must not pretend that I know all that the writers meant, or what they did not mean" ("‘And Thus We See:’ Helping a Student in a Moment of Doubt" [an evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 5, 1993], 6).

Notes



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Converting principles and the Basic Doctrines. When determining *what to teach*, a teacher should consider, “Of all the truths that could be emphasized in this block of scripture, which will help my students to draw closer to Heavenly Father and the Savior and lead to salvation?” Elder Henry B. Eyring counseled: “As you prepare a lesson, look in it for converting principles. . . . A converting principle is one that leads to obedience to the will of God” (“Converting Principles” [remarks at an evening with Elder L. Tom Perry, Feb. 2, 1996], 1).

Teachers should also determine if the scripture block they are covering teaches any of the Basic Doctrines that S&I has chosen to emphasize. These doctrines provide students with an understanding of Heavenly Father's plan and the fundamental beliefs of the Church (see section 2.7.2, "Basic Doctrines," on page 35).

The needs and abilities of students. The better a teacher knows and understands his or her students, the easier it will be to identify and emphasize relevant principles that can be readily applied. As teachers study a scripture block, they may find ideas or concepts that are personally exciting or of particular personal significance, but these may be beyond the spiritual readiness and understanding of the students (see, for example, Paul's meat and milk counsel in 1 Corinthians 3:2). Some principles that are not new or interesting to teachers may be of great importance to the students. Teachers need to remember that they are teaching students, not just lessons. They are creating a learning experience and not merely preparing lesson outlines. The curriculum can be especially helpful to teachers when determining which principles and doctrines may be most relevant to the students.



“There are two views of the gospel— both true. They make a terrific difference in the power of your teaching. One view is that the gospel is all truth. It is. The gospel is truth. With that view I could teach pretty well anything true in a classroom, and I would be teaching the gospel. The other view is that the gospel is the principles, commandments, and ordinances which, if kept, conformed with, and accepted, will lead to eternal life. This is also true.

“When I choose which of these views I will let dominate my teaching, I take a great step. If I take the view that the gospel is all truth, rather than that it is the ordinances and principles and commandments which, if kept, conformed with, and accepted, lead to eternal life, I have already nearly taken myself out of the contest to help a student withstand the sea of filth.”

(Henry B. Eyring, "Eyes to See, Ears to Hear" [CES symposium on the New Testament, Aug. 16, 1984], 6)

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Elder Richard G. Scott taught: “Determine, according to the individual capabilities and needs of your students, what is of highest priority. If a key principle is understood, internalized, and made part of the students’ guidebooks for life, then the most important objective has been accomplished” (“To Understand and Live Truth” [an evening with Elder Richard G. Scott, Feb. 4, 2005], 2–3).

While deciding what truths to emphasize, a teacher might also plan to briefly point out a principle or doctrine they are not planning to focus on when progressing through the scripture block. This can provide the Holy Ghost with an opportunity to personalize a principle that, although not a major focus of a lesson, may be important for an individual student. Teachers should also keep in mind that students may discover and wish to discuss some gospel truths that the teacher had not noticed or planned to discuss.

In all of these considerations, teachers should seek confirmation from the Spirit. The Spirit will help them better understand the intent of the inspired scripture writer, the needs of the students, and which gospel truths will help students draw nearer to their Heavenly Father and the Savior.

4. Decide what level of emphasis to give each segment of the scripture block.

Notes

With an understanding of the context and content of the scripture block, having divided it into smaller, content-related segments, and having identified important gospel truths for students to learn and apply, teachers are now prepared to decide what level of emphasis to give each segment of the scripture block. Generally, those segments that contain the doctrines and principles a teacher seeks to highlight in the lesson will receive the most emphasis. This means that for these groups of verses, teachers will lead students to understand their context and content, to identify and understand the important doctrines and principles found in them, to feel the truth and importance of those doctrines and principles in their hearts, and to help them see how they can apply those truths in their lives.

Other segments of the scripture block may focus less on the truths emphasized in the lesson, but they should not be skipped or ignored. Teachers should plan to at least summarize these groups of verses as well.

Note: It is rare to have unlimited preparation time. A common mistake teachers make is to spend so much time reading and studying and trying to decide *what to teach* that there is not enough time to thoughtfully prepare *how to teach* it. There comes a point in the preparation of every lesson where a teacher must say, “I feel I have a sufficient understanding of *what to teach*. Now I need to decide *how* I will teach it effectively.”

Decide How to Teach [4.3.4]

It is common for teachers to become excited about the scripture block they will be teaching and the truths they have discovered. Through diligent effort to study, understand, and be taught by the Spirit, teachers are edified and naturally feel a desire to communicate what they learned during their preparation. While this may be appropriate, it should be remembered that the purpose of any lesson is for *students* to understand the scriptures, be taught by the Holy Ghost, and feel encouraged to apply what *they* learn. This almost always requires more than teachers telling students what they themselves have learned from the scriptures and why they feel it is important. It also involves more than a teacher reading a verse, commenting on it, then reading another verse.

Students are edified when they are led through a learning process that is similar to what the teacher has experienced during lesson preparation. Students should be led to search the scriptures for understanding and to discover the truths of the gospel for themselves. They should be given opportunities to explain the gospel in their own words and to share and testify of what they know and feel. This helps to bring the gospel from their heads down into their hearts.

As students consistently experience learning the gospel in this way, they gain confidence in their ability to study the scriptures for themselves and learn by the Spirit. They feel a desire to apply what they are learning in their lives. They are also better prepared to explain what they believe to others and to bear testimony of the doctrines and principles of the gospel.

Notes

Teachers should plan methods that will help students experience this learning process as they move through the scriptures together in class. As teachers develop their lesson plan, the answers to the following questions provide the basis for deciding *how to teach*:

1. What methods or learning activities will help my students understand the context and content they need to know?
2. What methods will help students be able to identify and verbalize the key doctrines and principles and give them opportunity to discover others?
3. What will be the best way to help my students understand these principles and doctrines?
4. What methods or approaches will lead my students to feel the truth and importance of these principles and invite them to share and testify of them?
5. What will be an effective way to help them see how they can apply these principles in their lives and encourage them to do so?

Following are some considerations in deciding how to teach.

Ensure that teaching methods are in harmony with the message being taught and conducive to the influence of the Spirit. Sometimes, in an attempt to entertain students or hold their interest, teachers choose methods or use techniques that do not lead to understanding and edification. When selecting methods, teachers should consider if the method enhances or detracts from the message it is intended to help students internalize. For example, an instructional game might be an enjoyable and effective way to teach information (such as the order of the books in the Bible), but will almost certainly be counterproductive if the end goal is to invite a spiritual feeling. Working in small groups can be effective, but since it takes considerable time, it may not be the best method for identifying a simple stated principle.

The teacher should ensure that teaching methods and activities are appropriate for a gospel learning setting, will not offend or hurt anyone, and will be conducive to the Spirit's influence.

"A superior teacher of the gospel will teach from the prescribed course material, with greatest emphasis on teaching the doctrine and principles and covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

(Dallin H. Oaks, "Gospel Teaching," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 79)



Use the curriculum. The seminary and institute curriculum offers suggestions of *how to teach* that implement the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning. As teachers prepare each lesson, they should carefully review the curriculum and select which information and methods they will use to teach the scripture block. Teachers may choose to use all or part of the curriculum suggestions for a scripture block or adapt the suggested ideas to the needs and circumstances of their class.

Establish relevancy and purpose. When students see the relevance of what they are studying in the scripture block to their own situations and circumstances, they are generally more motivated to learn and apply gospel teachings. They are also able to see how the scriptures provide answers and direction that can guide them in real-life situations.

Therefore, when preparing *how to teach*, teachers would be wise to reflect on the eternal truths contained in the scripture block and to consider how they may be useful and meaningful in the lives of the students. With this in mind,

teachers will often begin the lesson with a relevant question, situation, or problem that will lead the students to search the scriptures for gospel principles and doctrines that give them guidance and direction. As they prepare lessons, teachers should also plan ways to maintain interest and continually engage students in the learning process.

Determine pacing. Teachers should make diligent effort to cover the entire scripture block. However, in determining how much time to spend on various parts of the lesson, it is important for teachers to remember that they are teaching students, not lessons. Teachers should not be so focused on rigidly following the lesson plan that they do not allow for the possibility of inspiration or unplanned student participation during the class that may make it necessary to modify the lesson.

One of the most common mistakes teachers make is taking too much time on the first part of the lesson and then having to rush through the last part. As teachers prepare, they need to estimate how much time it will take to cover each section of the lesson using the methods they have chosen. Because a teacher will almost always have more to teach than there is time to teach it, they will need to determine which portions of the block to emphasize and what to summarize.

The need for pacing applies to the full course as well as to individual lessons. For example, in a New Testament course, if teachers spend too much time in the four Gospels, they will not be able to adequately cover the important gospel truths found in the later books.

Most seminary and institute curriculum offers pacing suggestions and a schedule for covering the entire course.

Focus on helping students fulfill their role. As teachers prepare how they will teach, they should stay focused on the learner and not just on what the teacher will do. Rather than merely asking “What will I do in class today?” or “What will I teach my students?” a teacher should also approach lesson preparation thinking, “What will my students do in class today?” “How will I help my students discover what they need to know?”

Use a variety of methods and approaches. Even a persuasive teaching technique may become ineffective or boring if overused. While teachers should not select methods for the sake of variety alone, many effective teachers vary the ways they teach during each lesson and also from day to day. Teachers should be prepared to change methods during the lesson if the students have lost interest or if what they are doing does not seem to be helping the students reach the desired outcomes.

Using a variety of teaching methods can also help reach students who learn in different ways. Teaching methods or learning activities that require students to use a variety of senses, such as seeing, hearing, and touching can help improve the students’ participation and their recollection of what is taught.

While teachers should generally select methods they feel comfortable and competent using, they should be willing to experiment with new methods or approaches that can make them even more effective.

The next section of this handbook discusses a variety of teaching methods and approaches that teachers can consider when deciding *how to teach*.

Notes



5

Teaching Methods, Skills, and Approaches

Teaching is a complex and multifaceted task. A list of methods or techniques for teaching would include many ideas and examples, and a full discussion of them would fill volumes. It is possible, however, to cluster them into some general areas of teaching methods, skills, or approaches that are essential to effective teaching. This section will address some of these important areas.

When deciding which methods to use in teaching, it is important to remember that methods and skills are only means to an end, not an end in and of themselves. Teachers should select methods that will best help students understand the content, doctrines, and principles of a particular scripture block and that will facilitate edification and application. Keeping in mind the purpose for using a specific skill or technique will help teachers implement it in a more meaningful way. It is also important to remember that without the Spirit, even the most effective teaching methods and approaches will not succeed.

Questions [5.1]

Asking effective questions is one of the most important skills a teacher can develop. Questions can engage students in the process of understanding the scriptures and help them identify and understand important gospel truths. Questions also help students reflect upon how the gospel has influenced their lives and to consider how they may apply gospel principles now and in the future. Asking effective questions can encourage students to invite the Holy Ghost into their learning experience through exercising their agency and fulfilling their role in the learning process.

It is worth great effort to carefully craft questions during lesson preparation that will lead to understanding and engage the minds and hearts of the students as they learn. When planning questions, a teacher should first determine the purpose for which they are asking a particular question (for example, a teacher may desire to have students discover information within a scriptural passage, to think about the meaning of a passage, or to share testimony of the truthfulness of a principle). The teacher should then thoughtfully design the question with that purpose in mind.

A few carefully chosen words can make a great difference in whether or not a question results in the desired outcome.

Teachers should strive to prepare and ask questions that stimulate thinking and feeling. They should generally avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” or where the answer is so obvious that the students are not motivated to think about it. Teachers should also avoid questions that could spark controversy as this may frustrate the students and create contention in the class, which grieves the Spirit (see 3 Nephi 11:29).

“To ask and to answer questions is at the heart of all learning and all teaching.”

(Henry B. Eyring, “The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest” [an evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 6, 1998], 5–6)



When asking questions in class, it is important for teachers to give students time to think about their response. Sometimes teachers ask a question, pause for a second or two, and then when no one immediately responds, panic and give the answer themselves. Effective questions, however, often require thought and reflection, and students may need time to find the answer in the scriptures or to formulate a meaningful answer. On occasion it can be helpful to give students time to write down their answer before responding.

Jesus Christ, the Master Teacher, used different types of questions to encourage others to ponder and apply the principles He taught. His questions varied depending on what He was seeking to bring about in the lives of those He was teaching. Some questions encouraged His listeners to think and to refer to the scriptures for answers, such as when He asked, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). Other questions were intended to invite commitment, as when He asked, "What manner of men ought ye to be?" (3 Nephi 27:27).

While there is a wide variety of questions a teacher may ask, there are four general types of questions that are particularly important in gospel teaching and learning:

1. Questions that invite students to *search for information*
2. Questions that lead students to *analyze for understanding*
3. Questions that *invite feelings and testimony*
4. Questions that *encourage application*

Questions That Invite Students to Search for Information [5.1.1]

Search questions help students build their basic understanding of the scriptures by inviting them to search for important details relating to the content of the scripture block. Because search questions encourage students to look for information within the text of the scriptures, it is helpful to ask such questions before reading the verses where the answers are found. This focuses the students' attention and allows them to discover the answers within the scriptural account.

Search questions often include words such as *who*, *what*, *when*, *how*, *where*, and *why*. Some examples of questions that invite students to *search for information* include:

- According to Matthew 19:22, *why* did the rich young man leave feeling sorrowful?
- In 1 Samuel 17:24, *how* did the men of Israel respond when they saw Goliath? *How* did David respond in verse 26?
- *What* counsel did Alma give his son Shiblon in Alma chapter 38, verses 5–15?

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Answers to search questions should establish a foundation of basic understanding upon which other types of questions can then build to prompt greater understanding and application. The Savior's question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13) produced a background of information. The answers given by His disciples prepared them for the deeper and more poignant question, "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15).

Questions That Lead Students to *Analyze for Understanding* [5.1.2]

Analyze questions are usually asked after students have become familiar with the verses they are studying. They can invite learners to seek for a broader and deeper understanding of the scriptures. They can help students examine relationships and patterns or discover contrasts within the scriptures. Analyze questions almost always have more than one possible answer.

Analyze questions generally serve at least one of three purposes. They can help students:

- Better understand the context and content of the scriptures.
- Identify gospel principles and doctrines.
- Develop a deeper understanding of those principles and doctrines.

Helping students better understand the context and content of the scriptures. Analyze questions can help students expand their understanding of the scriptural text and events by helping them examine passages in the context of their historical and cultural background, or in the light of other passages of scripture. Such questions can also help students clarify the meaning of words or phrases and assist them in analyzing the details of the story line for greater meaning. This process prepares students to be able to identify principles and doctrines.

Examples of these types of questions include:

- How does Jesus's explanation in Matthew 13:18–23 help us understand His teachings in verses 3 through 8?
- What differences do you see between Laman and Lemuel's response to the angel's direction and Nephi's response? (see 1 Nephi 3:31; 4:1–7).
- What led to the loss of the 116 pages that prompted the Lord to counsel Joseph Smith that he "should not have feared man more than God"? (D&C 3:7).

Helping students identify gospel principles and doctrines. As students develop their understanding of the context and content of the scriptures, they are better able to identify the principles and doctrines they contain. Analyze questions can help students draw conclusions and articulate clearly the principles or doctrines found in the scripture block (see section 2.5.1, "Identify Doctrines and Principles" on page 26).

Some examples of these questions include:

- What principle is illustrated by Nephi's success in obtaining the brass plates despite great difficulty? (see 1 Nephi 3–4).



- What doctrines concerning the nature of God can we learn from the First Vision? (see JS—H 1:15–20).
- What lesson can we learn from the effort made by the woman with the issue of blood to reach the Savior, and His response to her as a result? (see Mark 5:24–34).

Helping students develop a deeper understanding of principles and doctrines. In addition to *identifying* principles and doctrines, students need to *understand* them before they can be meaningfully applied. Questions that lead to a clearer understanding of the meaning of a particular principle or doctrine, that encourage students to think about a principle in a modern context, or that invite students to explain their understanding of a principle are particularly helpful. The following are some examples:

- What would be evidence that we loved God with all our “might, mind and strength?” (Moroni 10:32).
- Why would praying always help you gain the spiritual strength necessary to overcome such temptations as speaking unkindly to others or participating in entertainment that is offensive to the Spirit? (see D&C 10:5).
- What behaviors and characteristics would you see in the life of someone who was building on the foundation of Christ? (see Helaman 5:1–14).
- Using what we have learned in Alma 40, how would you explain the doctrine of resurrection to a friend who is not of our faith?

Questions That *Invite Feelings and Testimony* [5.1.3]

Some questions help students *think* about and *understand* gospel principles and doctrines, while others can cause them to reflect on spiritual experiences and lead students to *feel* more deeply the truthfulness and significance of a gospel principle or doctrine in their lives. Many times, those feelings engender a stronger desire in the hearts of students to live a gospel principle more faithfully. In an address to CES religious educators, Elder Henry B. Eyring referred to these kinds of questions when he said:

“Some questions invite inspiration. Great teachers ask those. . . . Here is a question that might not invite inspiration: ‘How is a true prophet recognized?’ That question invites an answer which is a list, drawn from memory of the scriptures and the words of living prophets. Many students could participate in answering. Most could give at least a passable suggestion. And minds would be stimulated.

“But we could also ask the question this way, with just a small difference: ‘When have you felt that you were in the presence of a prophet?’ That will invite individuals to search their memories for feelings. After asking, we might wisely wait for a moment before calling on someone to respond. Even those who do not speak will be thinking of spiritual experiences. That will invite the Holy Ghost” (“The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest,” 6).

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Such questions invite students to reflect on the past, to “search their memories for feelings,” and to think of their spiritual experiences related to the gospel doctrine or principle being discussed. Often, these questions result in students sharing those feelings and experiences or bearing testimony of a doctrine or principle. These questions help bring the gospel from students’ minds down into their hearts. And when they *feel* in their hearts the truthfulness and importance of a gospel doctrine or principle, they are more likely to apply it in their lives.

Here are some examples of questions that can encourage feeling and invite testimony:

- When have you felt the peace and joy that comes from forgiving someone?
- Think of a time when the Lord directed your decisions because you trusted in Him rather than relying on your own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5–6). How were you blessed for doing so?
- If you could personally express your gratitude to the Savior for His sacrifice for you, what would you tell Him?
- How is your life different because of what happened in the Sacred Grove?
- When have you seen others respond faithfully to trials? How has that influenced you?

A word of caution: Responses to questions of this nature can be especially personal and sensitive. Teachers should ensure that students never feel forced to answer a question, share their feelings or experiences, or bear testimony. In addition, teachers should help students understand the sacred nature of personal spiritual experiences and encourage them to share those experiences appropriately (see D&C 63:64).

Questions That *Encourage Application* [5.1.4]

Ultimately, the aim of gospel teaching is to help students apply the principles and doctrines found in the scriptures and qualify to receive the blessings promised those who are faithful and obedient. Students who are able to see how they have been blessed by living gospel principles in the past will be more desirous and better prepared to successfully apply them in the future. Questions can play a vital role in helping students see how they can apply these principles in their current situations and consider how they can apply them in the future.

Following are some examples of questions that can help students think specifically about ways they can apply principles and doctrines in their own lives:

- What changes would you need to make to better keep the Sabbath day holy so that you can be more fully unspotted from the world? (see D&C 59:9–13).
- What is something the prophet has counseled that you could follow with greater exactness? (see Alma 57:1–27).
- How can the principle that *if we seek the kingdom of God first, we will be blessed in other areas of our lives* help you prioritize your goals and activities for the next two or three years? (see Matthew 6:33).

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Rephrase the question. At times students may struggle to respond to a question because the question is not clear. The teacher may need to rephrase the question or ask the students if they understand what was asked. Teachers should avoid asking a series of questions in succession without allowing students adequate time to think deeply enough to formulate appropriate responses.

Listen carefully and ask follow-up questions. Teachers are sometimes so concerned about what to say or do next that they do not pay attention to what students are saying. By observing and listening carefully to students, teachers can discern their needs and guide the discussion under the direction of the Holy Ghost. Teachers can make sure they understand the students' answers by asking questions like "Can you help me understand what you mean by that?" or "Can you give me an example of what you mean?" Asking such follow-up questions will often invite a student to share more of what they are thinking and feeling and frequently invites a spirit of testimony in the response. Teachers should remind students to listen to each other as well and not to talk when someone else is speaking.

"Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all."

(Doctrine and Covenants 88:122)



Redirect student's comments or questions. Many times class discussions follow a pattern where a teacher asks a question, a student responds, and then the teacher adds his or her insight to the student's answer before asking the next question.

Discussions can become much more meaningful, lively, and effective when a teacher redirects an answer or comment from one student to other students. Simple questions like “What would you add to that?” or “What are your thoughts on that comment?” can create a pattern where students respond to students. This often greatly enhances the learning experience.

Usually, unless time is limited, all students who desire to make a comment should have an opportunity to speak.

Acknowledge the response in a positive manner. When a student gives a response, the teacher needs to acknowledge it in some way. This can be a simple “thank you” or a comment about the answer. When an incorrect response is given, the teacher needs to be careful not to embarrass the student. An effective teacher can build on a part of the student’s comment that is correct or ask a follow-up question that allows a student to rethink his or her response.

Read the Scriptures Together in Class [5.3]

Reading the scriptures in class can help students become familiar with and better understand the verses they are studying. It can also help them become more confident in their ability to read the scriptures on their own. Teachers need to be careful not to embarrass those who do not read well or who are very shy. Students who prefer not to read aloud should not be forced to do so, but teachers can encourage them to participate in ways that they are more comfortable with. For example, assigning a short scriptural passage to a student beforehand so he or she can practice reading it may be an appropriate way for that student to participate in class.

There are several ways to read the scriptures together in class:

- Have students read aloud, either one-by-one or in unison.
- Have students read to each other.
- Have students read a passage silently.
- Assign different students to read the words spoken by various individuals in a story.
- Read aloud to the students as they follow in their scriptures.

Notes

Teacher Presentation [5.4]

While the importance of students taking an active role in the learning process is significant to their understanding and application of the scriptures, it does not replace the need for a teacher to appropriately present information at varying times while students listen. For the purposes of this handbook, those times when a teacher talks and the students listen will be called “teacher presentation.” When used appropriately, teacher presentation can enhance other teaching methods. If overused, however, this teacher-centered activity can reduce teaching effectiveness and limit a student’s opportunity to learn by study and faith.

Teacher presentation can be very effective when summarizing large amounts of material, presenting information that is new to students, making transitions between various parts of the lesson, or drawing conclusions. A teacher might need to explain, clarify, and illustrate so that students can more clearly understand the context of a scripture block. A teacher may also emphasize key doctrines and principles and exhort students to apply them. Perhaps most importantly, teachers can testify of gospel truths and express their own love for Heavenly Father and His Son.

When using teacher presentation, as when using any teaching method, teachers should continually be assessing students’ receptivity by asking themselves questions like: “Are my students interested and focused?” and “Do they understand what is being presented?” In the end, the effectiveness of this or any other method of teaching is determined by whether or not students are learning by the Spirit, understanding the scriptures, and desiring to apply what they are learning.

The following ideas can help a teacher utilize this method more effectively.

Plan the teacher presentation portions of the lesson.

Occasionally, teachers carefully prepare other parts of the lesson but do not give the same attention to those portions of the lesson when they will be doing most of the talking. One of the concerns about teacher presentation is that students can easily become only passive participants in the learning experience. Therefore, teacher presentation also needs careful planning and preparation, which includes deciding how to begin and how to develop the instruction in a logical fashion.



Notes

When planning the use of teacher presentation, teachers should carefully consider where it is particularly important for students to take an active role. Generally, as the lesson progresses from understanding the context and content of a scripture block to the discovery, discussion, and application of principles and doctrines, the importance of students taking an active role increases.

Combine teacher presentation with other methods. An effective use of teacher presentation in the classroom is to use it as part of an overall lesson plan that incorporates other methods and approaches within the instruction. The presentation should be flexible enough to allow for change if it becomes obvious that students are bored or confused. In this way, even when the teacher is speaking, the focus remains on the students and on learning, and the teacher can make adaptations as needed. Someone once likened teacher presentation to the string in a necklace of pearls. The pearls are the various methods a teacher uses (questions, discussion, group work, audiovisual presentations, etc.), but they are strung and held together by the teacher's instruction and explanation. The string alone does not make an attractive necklace.

Use appropriate variety. There are ways to introduce variety in teacher presentation. Teachers can avoid sameness by changing voice inflection, tone, and volume and by moving around the room as the presentation progresses. There can also be a variety in the kinds of material being presented. For example, teachers can relate stories, use appropriate humor, refer to pictures or other classroom displays, read quotes, use the board or audiovisual presentations, and bear testimony. Appropriate variety in teacher presentation should always enhance students' ability to understand and apply the scriptures.

Stories [5.5]

Stories can help build students' faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They can generate interest and help students understand the gospel through vicarious experiences. Stories can also be particularly effective in helping students understand gospel principles that have been identified within a scripture block. By illustrating a gospel principle in a modern context, in addition to the context of the scriptures, stories can help students understand how a gospel principle relates to their lives, as well as help them feel a desire to apply it.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: "There is, of course, nothing wrong with telling a modern faith-promoting story, one that has happened in our dispensation. . . . Indeed, this should be encouraged to the full. We should make every effort to show that the same things are happening in the lives of the Saints today as transpired among the faithful of old. . . .

"Perhaps the perfect pattern in presenting faith-promoting stories is to teach what is found in the scriptures and then to put a seal of living reality upon it by telling a similar and equivalent thing that has happened in our dispensation and to our people and—most ideally—to us as individuals" ("The How and Why of Faith-Promoting Stories," *New Era*, July 1978, 4–5).

Teachers can share stories from the lives of the prophets and from Church history, as well as stories found in general conference addresses and Church magazines. They can also share true stories from their own experience. Some of the most meaningful and impactful learning experiences occur when teachers invite students to share stories from their own lives that illustrate how they were blessed by living a gospel principle.

Some cautions and counsel should be noted about the use of stories.

- If the telling of stories becomes the dominant method or technique of teaching, the stories themselves can become the focus of the lesson, minimizing the actual time spent in the scriptures and overshadowing the doctrines and principles they teach.
- The use of too many stories from the teachers' own life can result in personal aggrandizement and teachers "[setting] themselves up for a light unto the world" (2 Nephi 26:29).
- While stories can enlighten and enliven scripture teaching and help students feel the power of the Spirit, they should never be used for emotional manipulation.
- Teachers should be careful not to embellish the facts of a true story to make it more dramatic or impactful.
- If a story is not true, such as a humorous story that illustrates a point, it should be clearly stated at the beginning of the story that it is not true.

Notes

Small Group Discussions and Assignments [5.6]

It is sometimes helpful to divide the class into pairs or small groups so students can participate in a learning activity or discussion together. Small group activities can often allow a greater number of students to participate and can provide a safe environment where students can share feelings, thoughts, and testimony with each other. These activities can also provide opportunities for students to teach the gospel to others and help prepare them to teach the gospel in the future. Discussions in small groups can effectively involve those who seem to be losing interest and concentration, as well as enable students to develop communication skills and strengthen appropriate social and spiritual relationships. They can also instill confidence in reserved students, drawing out of them more meaningful participation.



When having students work in pairs or small groups, it can be helpful to keep in mind the following:

- Prior to separating students into small groups, teachers should provide clear instructions of what students will be expected to do during the activity. It is often helpful to have these instructions written on the board or printed on a handout, allowing the students to refer back to them during the activity.
- Small group learning activities that are relevant to students' lives and circumstances generally promote greater interest and participation.

Notes

- Assigning a student leader for each group as well as a specific time limit helps the group stay on task. Lengthy group activities often result in groups finishing at different times and can lead to disorder in the classroom.
- Generally students participate in the activity with greater interest if the teacher invites them beforehand to prepare to share with or teach the class something they have learned from the activity. This also provides opportunities for students to practice teaching the gospel to others.
- Students often work better in groups when they search the scriptures, read a quotation, or fulfill some other task individually before they gather together.
- In groups of five or more students, it can become difficult for each individual to participate meaningfully. In addition, larger groups generally have a more difficult time staying on task.
- Working in small groups might not be the best method for answering simple questions because of the time required to organize students into groups.
- When group learning activities are overused, they can become less effective.

During small group discussions or assignments, students can become distracted from the purpose of the activity, visit on personal matters, or become casual in their efforts to learn. A teacher who remains actively involved by moving from group to group and monitoring the learning activity can help students stay on task and gain the most from the assignment.

Writing Exercises [5.7]

Teachers should invite students to participate in writing exercises such as note-taking, journal assignments, worksheets, personal reflection, and essays. Occasionally, inviting students to respond to a thought-provoking question in writing helps deepen and clarify their thinking. Inviting students to respond to a question in writing before sharing their thoughts with the class gives them time to formulate their ideas and receive impressions from the Holy Ghost. Students may be more inclined to share their thoughts when they have written them first, and what they share will often be more meaningful. Among other things, writing assignments provide students with opportunities to participate personally, receive inspiration, prepare to teach and share their feelings with others, recognize the Lord's hand in their lives, and express testimony. As teachers decide which writing exercises are appropriate for a learning experience, they should consider this principle shared by Elder David A. Bednar: "Writing down what we learn, think, and feel as we study the scriptures is another form of pondering and a powerful invitation to the Holy Ghost for continuing instruction" ("Because We Have Them before Our Eyes, *New Era*, Apr. 2006, 6–7).

Writing exercises for students who are younger or whose abilities are more limited should be adapted to help them succeed. For example, a teacher could prepare a fill-in-the-blank exercise where more information is





Objects and Pictures [5.9]

It is often difficult to teach the intangible aspects of the gospel. Using objects and pictures can be an effective way for teachers to help students understand spiritual principles. For example, a familiar object like soap could help students understand a more abstract principle like repentance. The Savior often referred to earthly objects (like bread, water, candles, and bushels) to help His listeners understand spiritual principles.

Objects and pictures can be used to help students visualize what the people, places, events, objects, and symbols in the scriptures looked like. Instead of just talking about yokes (see Matthew 11:28–30), a teacher could bring a yoke to class, show a picture of one, or illustrate it on the chalkboard. Students could smell and touch a flower as they read about the “lilies of the field” (Matthew 6:28–29). They could taste unleavened bread.

Objects and pictures, including maps and charts, can be effective in helping students visualize, analyze, and understand the scriptures, especially when they are used to stimulate a discussion. Having an object or picture on display as students enter the classroom can enhance the learning climate and encourage a spirit of inquiry within the students.

There are two cautions to consider when using objects and pictures: First, they should always reinforce the purpose of the lesson rather than detract from it. Second, the scriptural account should always be the source for the class discussion of the setting and details of an event, rather than an artist’s interpretation of the event or story.

Audiovisual and Computer Presentations [5.10]

The scriptures are filled with accounts of the Lord helping His children understand His teachings through sight and sound (see 1 Nephi 11–14; D&C 76; Moses 1:7–8, 27–29). Audiovisual and technology resources, when used appropriately and effectively, can help students better understand the scriptures and learn and apply gospel truths.

Audiovisual resources can portray important events from the scriptures and can help students visualize and experience these events. These resources can dramatize how people apply gospel principles to overcome their challenges and problems and can provide opportunities for the Spirit to bear witness of the truth.

Notes

Guidelines [5.10.1]

Perhaps more than with any other teaching method, the use of audiovisual resources and technology comes with some inherent challenges and potential liabilities. Teachers should use wisdom when deciding if an audiovisual or computer presentation would be appropriate and helpful to the learning experience. An overreliance on technology can lead to lessons that are technology- and media-driven rather than lessons that are scripture based and focused on the learner. The following questions can assist teachers in making wise decisions in the use of audiovisual and computer resources:

1. Does the resource help students learn what is important? Audiovisual presentations can be very entertaining or impressive to students, but does it directly contribute to the purposes of the lesson and to what students need to learn? Using these resources for entertainment or as time-fillers are not sufficient reasons for their use. Teachers should watch or listen to any presentation before using it in class and ensure that it reinforces or supports the scriptures and the doctrines and principles taught in the lesson.
2. Is it a resource to the lesson or its main focus? Elder Boyd K. Packer counseled: "Audio and visual aids in a class can be a blessing or a curse, depending upon how they are used. They might be compared to spices and flavorings that go with a meal. They should be used sparingly to accent or make a lesson interesting" (*Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. [1991], 265).
3. Is it appropriate and in keeping with Church standards? Is it edifying? Many products produced in the world may carry a good message but often come with undesirable content that can offend the Spirit or condone ideas that are not in harmony with the teachings of the gospel. A video or audio segment, even if appropriate, should not be used if it comes from a source that contains inappropriate material. Items that are controversial or sensational usually do not build faith and testimony.
4. Will it violate copyright or other applicable laws? Many videos, songs, and other audio and visual materials have use restrictions by virtue of copyright laws or user agreements. It is important that all seminary and institute teachers and leaders follow the copyright laws of the country in which they are teaching and that they are in compliance with applicable laws and obligations so that neither they nor the Church are liable for legal action.

The following guidelines apply to seminary and institute teachers and leaders in *all* countries.

The Use of Church-Produced Material [5.10.2]

Unless otherwise indicated on the Church-produced material, teachers and leaders can copy and show films, videos, images, and musical recordings that were produced by the Church for noncommercial Church and seminary and institute uses. Music from *Hymns*, the *Children's Songbook*, and Church magazines may be used for noncommercial Church and seminary and

institute uses, except where a restriction is expressly noted on the hymn or song. Seminary and institute teachers and leaders can download and show Church-produced materials in class, unless such materials contain a restriction stating otherwise.

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Use of Non-Church-Produced Material [5.10.3]

As a general rule, programs, software, and audiovisual materials should not be downloaded from the Internet or shown in class from the Internet unless the appropriate licenses have been purchased. Unless a video, song, or other audiovisual material is owned by the Church, there is a significant risk, in any country, that showing such material in class may violate copyright laws. Therefore, as a general rule, seminary and institute teachers and leaders across the world should not show their classes materials that are not produced by the Church.

Duplication of media containing copyrighted music (such as sheet music or musical recordings) is a direct violation of copyright law unless written permission has been given by the copyright owner. Duplication of copyrighted lyrics to a song is also illegal without permission.

The following guidelines specifically outline some exceptions to United States copyright law that would allow seminary and institute teachers and leaders in the United States to show video clips in class without first obtaining a license from the video's copyright owner. While similar exceptions exist in other countries, seminary and institute teachers should contact the Intellectual Property Office to determine the specific laws and exceptions that apply to their particular country before showing video clips from commercially-produced videos or programs recorded off the air or from the Internet.

Use of commercially-produced videos. United States law includes an exception that allows teachers and students to use commercially-produced videos in class without purchasing a license to do so. In this regard, however, commercially-produced videos can only be used under this exception if all of the following conditions are met. The video clip shown must be: (a) from a legally made copy; (b) used in face-to-face teaching, meaning a seminary and institute teacher or leader should be present while the clip is shown; (c) shown in a classroom or similar place devoted to instruction; (d) shown by a nonprofit educational organization, such as a seminary or institute class; and (e) shown for a teaching purpose that is directly related to the course curriculum and not for entertainment. Showing rented or purchased commercial media before, during, or after class merely as entertainment is illegal and dishonest. This would almost always be the case when a full movie is shown.

Use of programs recorded off the air. In the United States a television program that is offered without charge to the general public and is recorded off the air, or from cable, can be used in the classroom only if the following conditions are met: (a) The copy is retained no more than 45 days, and then it must be erased immediately. (b) The copy is used in the classroom only within the first 10 days following the date the copy was made (following the

Notes

first 10 days, but still within the first 45 days, the copy can only be used for teacher evaluation or to determine whether the program should be used in future lessons). (c) The copy is only shown once (twice only if instructional reinforcement is necessary). (d) The copy is only shown in a classroom or similar place devoted to instruction. (e) The overall message or content of the program is not altered. (f) The copy may not be duplicated for sharing with others. (g) Any copy must include the copyright notice for the program as recorded. (h) The program is not merged with segments (physically or electronically) of different programs to create a teaching compilation or other product.

In addition to the preceding requirements, clips from commercially-produced videos and programs recorded off the air or Internet should: (a) only show a portion of the video or program; (b) be used without any modification or editing to the program itself; (c) not be used in a manner that suggests that the program's creators or owners endorse the Church, seminaries and institutes or their teachings, or in a manner that suggests that the Church or seminaries and institutes endorse the program or its creators or owners; (d) not be used in a manner that arguably promotes the Church or seminaries and institutes; and (e) be used in accordance with any known content restrictions and Church policy.

If seminary and institute teachers or leaders have questions that are not answered by these guidelines, refer to section 21.1.12, "Copyrighted Materials" in the Church handbook (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 21.1.12). Then, if needed, contact:

Intellectual Property Office
50 E. North Temple Street, Room 1888
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0018
Telephone: 1-801-240-3959 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3959
Fax: 1-801-240-1187
E-mail: cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org



Music [5.11]

Music, especially the hymns of the Church, can play a significant role in helping students feel the influence of the Holy Ghost in their gospel learning experience. In the preface to the Church hymnbook, the First Presidency stated: "Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord."

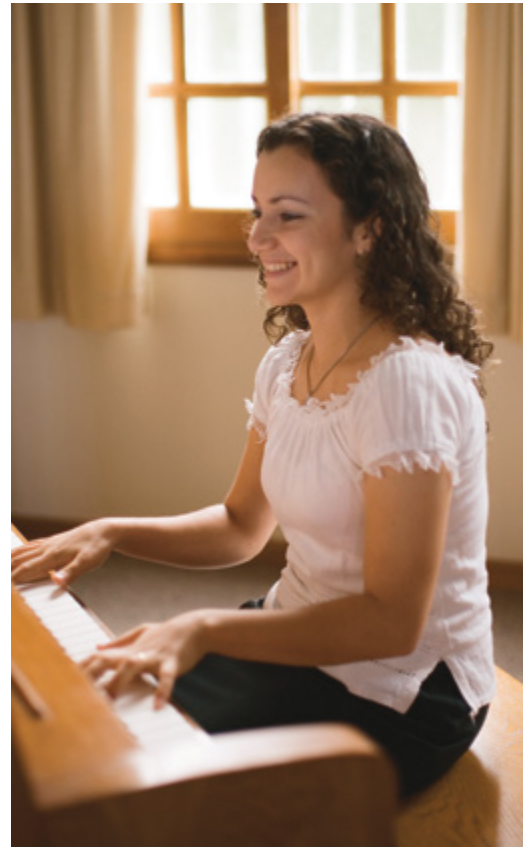
"Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end" (*Hymns*, ix). Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught: "I wonder if we are making enough use of this heaven-sent resource in our meetings, in our classes, and in our homes. . . ."

“Our sacred music is a powerful preparation for prayer and gospel teaching” (“Worship through Music,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 10, 12). Teachers should help students understand the importance of music in worship and how it can help create a climate where the Spirit can function more effectively.

Following are some ways teachers can use music to enhance the students' gospel learning experience:

- Have inspirational music playing as students come to class or during class while they are working on a writing assignment.
- Invite and encourage students to participate meaningfully when singing hymns together as a class.
- Review gospel principles and provide additional insights during the lesson by singing a hymn or a verse of a hymn that is directly related to what is being taught for that day. There is both a scriptural and a topical index in the back of the hymnbook that can be helpful in this regard.
- Provide opportunities where reading the words of the hymns can help students build and express testimony of the doctrines and principles of the gospel.
- Invite students to perform appropriate musical numbers in class.

When making decisions about using music in the classroom for any purpose (such as background music, scripture mastery, or memorization), it is important to remember the following caution from Elder Boyd K. Packer: “There have been a number of efforts to take sacred gospel themes and tie them to modern music in the hope of attracting our young people to the message. . . . I do not know how that can be done and result in increased spirituality. I think it cannot be done” (*That All May Be Edified* [1982], 279). Ultimately, it is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure that any music used in the learning experience is in harmony with Church standards and that it is in no way offensive to the Spirit of the Lord.

[illegible]

Notes

General Counsel and Cautions [5.12]

While a desire to build good relationships with students is appropriate, the desire to be praised, if unrecognized or unchecked, may cause teachers to care more about what the students think of them than they do about helping the students learn and progress. This often leads teachers to substitute methods that are intended to enhance their image in the eyes of the students for methods designed to invite the Holy Ghost. Teachers who fall into this trap are guilty of priestcraft because they “set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world” (2 Nephi 26:29). Teachers should be careful that their use of humor, personal stories, or any other teaching methods are not done with the intent of entertaining, impressing, or winning the praise of students. Rather, the focus of all religious educators should be to glorify Heavenly Father and to lead their students to Jesus Christ.

President Howard W. Hunter taught: “I am sure you recognize the potential danger of being so influential and so persuasive that your students build an allegiance to you rather than to the gospel. Now that is a wonderful problem to have to wrestle with, and we would only hope that all of you are such charismatic teachers. But there is a genuine danger here. That is why you have to invite your students into the scriptures themselves, not just give them your interpretation and presentation of them. That is why you must invite your students to feel the Spirit of the Lord, not just give them your personal reflection of that. That is why, ultimately, you must invite your students directly to Christ, not just to one who teaches his doctrines, however ably. You will not always be available to these students. You cannot hold their hands after they have left high school or college. And you do not need personal disciples” (“Eternal Investments” [an evening with President Howard W. Hunter, Feb. 10, 1989], 2).

In addition, the following counsel and cautions apply to a variety of teaching methods and situations:

- *Use of competition.* Teachers should be careful in the use of competition in the classroom, especially when students compete individually against one another. Competition can lead to contention, discouragement, ridicule, or embarrassment and cause the Spirit to withdraw.
- *Negative reinforcement.* Teachers should use wisdom in expressing disappointment with a class or with an individual student. Most students feel inadequate to some degree and need to be built up and encouraged rather than having their shortcomings reinforced.
- *Sarcasm.* Whether expressed by a teacher to a student or from one student to another, sarcasm is almost always negative and hurtful and can lead to ridicule and a loss of the Spirit.

- *Inappropriate communication and language.* Teachers should avoid shouting at or arguing with students. Profanity and vulgarity have no place in a religious education setting.
- *Use of physical force.* Teachers should never use their physical size and strength to intimidate or coerce a student to behave. Even playful physical exchanges can be misconstrued or escalate into something more serious. Teachers should engage physically with a student only when protection of another student warrants it.
- *Gender-specific language.* Teachers should be aware of and sensitive to gender-specific language in the scriptures. Some scriptures are couched in masculine language due to the nature of the languages they were derived from. Teachers should remind students that some masculine terms refer to both males and females. When Adam was told that “all men, everywhere, must repent” (Moses 6:57), the Lord was certainly speaking of both men and women. There are times when the masculine forms are specific and accurate. For example, the members of the Godhead are males, and references to priesthood duties apply to the brethren.

Notes

6

Continuing to Improve as a Teacher

As teachers strive to implement the principles and methods described in this handbook, they should constantly but patiently work to improve. Teachers must learn principles of effective teaching and master effective teaching skills line upon line through study, faith, practice, and experience. There are many ways to evaluate teaching effectiveness and to receive feedback and assistance as to how to improve. Some things that will help teachers improve are formal, structured methods such as observation and feedback from peers, supervisors, or students. There are also informal ways such as listening to students, watching other teachers, or sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues.

One of the most valuable sources of feedback can be self-assessment under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught:

“After a class, you might find a moment to pray that you might see clearly what happened in the class and what happened in the lives of the students. You may do it your own way, but the way I like to do it is something like this: I ask, ‘Was there something I said or did, or that they said or did, that lifted them?’ . . .

“If you ask in prayer, humbly and in faith, you will sometimes—perhaps often—have moments during that class brought back to your memory of a look on a student’s face, or the sound in a student’s voice, or even the way the student sat up and leaned forward at some point in the lesson that will give you reassurance that they were lifted.

“But more important than that, it can give you the chance to learn. You can learn what happened in the classroom and, therefore, what you can do to bring those lifting experiences to your students again and again” (“Converting Principles” [remarks at an evening with Elder L. Tom Perry, Feb. 2, 1996], 2).

As teachers desire to improve and consistently work to teach in a way that is pleasing to Father in Heaven, He will inspire them in their preparation, strengthen their relationships with students, magnify their efforts in the classroom, and bless them with His Spirit to more fully accomplish His work. He will also help them see areas where they can progress as they strive to teach in a way that leads students to understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, the goal of every religious educator should be to represent as well as possible the Savior of the world as “a teacher come from God” (John 3:2). Speaking to a group of seminary and institute faculty, Elder Boyd K. Packer said: “The attributes which it has been my choice privilege to recognize in you brethren and sisters over [the] years are no more nor less than the image of the Master Teacher showing through. I believe that to the degree you perform, according to the challenge and charge which you have, the image of Christ



does become engraved upon your countenances. And for all practical purposes, in that classroom at that time and in that expression and with that inspiration, you are He and He is you" ("The Ideal Teacher" [address to seminary and institute faculty, June 28, 1962], 5–6).

The Lord's Promise [6.1]

Teaching the gospel is the Lord's work, and He wants seminary and institute teachers to succeed in that task. When teachers and leaders call on Him daily, they will feel that help come. He gives a promise to those who are striving to live and teach His gospel:

"Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;

"For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.

"But a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall declare whatsoever thing ye declare in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things.

"And I give unto you this promise, that inasmuch as ye do this the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever ye shall say" (D&C 100:5–8).





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