

TEACHING SEMINARY

PRESERVICE READINGS

RELIGION 370, 471, AND 475



TEACHING SEMINARY

PRESERVICE READINGS

Introduction to Teaching Seminary, Religion 370

Methods for Teaching Seminary, Religion 471

Seminary Teaching Seminar, Religion 475

Prepared by the
Church Educational System

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SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION

**ELDER RICHARD G. SCOTT
OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES**

In Principles of the Gospel in Practice, Sperry Symposium 1985 (1985), 6

When I first received Church assignments that embodied counseling and training others, I was very anxious to share personal experiences that I considered to have some application in the lives of those individuals. This sharing was based on an honest



desire to help. As I gained further experience, when someone came for help or for counsel, I seemed to have a list of experiences from my own life, or lessons learned from others, that I wanted to share to benefit them. This was done with great sincerity and a desire to help.

As the years have passed, I find that I am now much less moved to help people with the things that I have learned. Rather I am powerfully motivated to share with them *how* the lessons were learned.

Many such lessons have deeply touched and molded my life. Yet I have come to recognize that the guidance, understanding, enlightenment, and experience most treasured have come directly from the Lord through the Holy Spirit.

THE CHARTED COURSE OF THE CHURCH IN EDUCATION

**PRESIDENT J. REUBEN
CLARK JR.**

**FIRST COUNSELOR IN THE
FIRST PRESIDENCY**

Revised edition (1994). Address to religious educators, 8 August 1938, Brigham Young University

“Dear Colleagues: . . .

“President Clark’s summation of the responsibilities teachers have to the Church and its mission and to students’ spiritual needs are relevant, comprehensive, and inspirational.

“Its significance pertains to the whole Church, and may well serve as an authoritative guide in all our teaching and all our meetings—auxiliary and otherwise, where there is any possibility of Church facilities and Church time being used to expose Church people to contrary influences” (introduction to “The Charted Course of the Church in Education,” Improvement Era, Sept. 1938, p. 520). . . .

As a school boy I was thrilled with the great debate between those two giants, Webster and Hayne. The beauty of their oratory, the sublimity of Webster’s lofty expression of patriotism, the forecast of the civil struggle to come for the mastery of freedom over slavery, all stirred me to the very depths. The debate began over the Foot Resolution concerning the public lands. It developed into consideration of great fundamental problems of constitutional law. I have never forgotten the opening paragraph of Webster’s reply, by which he brought back to its place of



beginning this debate that had drifted so far from its course. That paragraph reads:

“Mr. President: When the mariner has been tossed for many days in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence, and, before we float farther on the waves of this debate, refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are. I ask for the reading of the resolution.”

Now I hasten to express the hope that you will not think that I think this is a Webster-Hayne occasion or that I think I am a Daniel Webster. If you were to think those things—either of them—you would make a grievous mistake. I admit I am old, but I am not that old. But Webster seemed to invoke so sensible a procedure for occasions where, after wandering on the high seas or in the wilderness, effort is to be made to get back to the place of starting, that I thought you would excuse me if I invoked and in a way used this same procedure to restate some of the more outstanding and essential fundamentals underlying our Church school education.

The following are to me those fundamentals:

The Church is the organized priesthood of God. The priesthood can exist without the Church, but the Church cannot exist without the priesthood. The mission of the Church is first, to teach, encourage, assist, and protect the individual member in his striving to live the perfect life, temporally and spiritually, as laid down in the Gospels, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father

which is in heaven is perfect,” by the Master (Matthew 5:48). Secondly, the Church is to maintain, teach, encourage, and protect, temporally and spiritually, the membership as a group in its living of the gospel. Thirdly, the Church is militantly to proclaim the truth, calling upon all men to repent, and to live in obedience to the gospel, for every knee must bow and every tongue confess (see Mosiah 27:31).

In all this there are for the Church, and for each and all of its members, two prime things which may not be overlooked, forgotten, shaded, or discarded:

First—that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, the Creator of the world, the Lamb of God, the Sacrifice for the sins of the world, the Atoner for Adam’s transgression; that He was crucified; that His spirit left His body; that He died; that He was laid away in the tomb; that on the third day His spirit was reunited with His body, which again became a living being; that He was raised from the tomb a resurrected being, a perfect Being, the First Fruits of the Resurrection; that He later ascended to the Father; and that because of His death and by and through His resurrection every man born into the world since the beginning will be likewise literally resurrected. This doctrine is as old as the world. Job declared:

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

“Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:26–27).

The resurrected body is a body of flesh and bones and spirit, and Job was uttering a great and everlasting truth. These positive facts, and all other facts necessarily implied therein, must all be honestly believed, in full faith, by every member of the Church.

The second of the two things to which we must all give full faith is that the Father and the Son actually and in truth and very deed appeared to the Prophet Joseph in a vision in the woods; that other heavenly visions followed to Joseph and to others; that the gospel and the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God were in truth and fact restored to the earth from which they were lost by the apostasy of the primitive Church; that the Lord again set up His Church, through the agency of Joseph Smith; that the Book of Mormon is just what it professes to be; that to the Prophet came numerous revelations for the guidance, upbuilding, organization, and encouragement of the Church and its members; that the Prophet’s successors, likewise called of God, have received revelations as the needs of the Church have required, and that they will continue to receive revelations as the Church and its members, living the truth they already have, shall stand in need of more; that

this is in truth The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and that its foundation beliefs are the laws and principles laid down in the Articles of Faith. These facts also, and each of them, together with all things necessarily implied therein or flowing therefrom, must stand, unchanged, unmodified, without dilution, excuse, apology, or avoidance; they may not be explained away or submerged. Without these two great beliefs the Church would cease to be the Church.

Any individual who does not accept the fulness of these doctrines as to Jesus of Nazareth or as to the restoration of the gospel and holy priesthood is not a Latter-day Saint; the hundreds of thousands of faithful, God-fearing men and women who compose the great body of the Church membership do believe these things fully and completely, and they support the Church and its institutions because of this belief.

I have set out these matters because they are the latitude and longitude of the actual location and position of the Church, both in this world and in eternity. Knowing our true position, we can change our bearings if they need changing; we can lay down anew our true course. And here we may wisely recall that Paul said:

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Returning to the Webster-Hayne precedent, I have now finished reading the original resolution.

As I have already said, I am to say something about the religious education of the youth of the Church. I shall bring together what I have to say under two general headings—the student and the teacher. I shall speak very frankly, for we have passed the place where we may wisely talk in ambiguous words and veiled phrases. We must say plainly what we mean, because the future of our youth, both here on earth and in the hereafter, as also the welfare of the whole Church, are at stake.

The youth of the Church, your students, are in great majority sound in thought and in spirit. The problem primarily is to keep them sound, not to convert them.

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. They want to know about the fundamentals I have just set out—about our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of their truth. They are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth. Doubt must not be planted in their hearts. Great is the burden and the condemnation of any teacher who sows doubt in a trusting soul.

These students crave the faith their fathers and mothers have; they want it in its simplicity and purity. There are few indeed who have not seen the manifestations of its

divine power. They wish to be not only the beneficiaries of this faith, but they want to be themselves able to call it forth to work.

They want to believe in the ordinances of the gospel; they wish to understand them so far as they may.

They are prepared to understand the truth, which is as old as the gospel and which was expressed thus by Paul (a master of logic and metaphysics unapproached by the modern critics who decry all religion):

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11–12).

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5).

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

“But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Galatians 5:16–18).

Our youth understand, too, the principle declared in modern revelation:

“Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation” (D&C 58:3).

“By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God. . . .

“And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about.

“And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness;

“And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshipping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever.

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. . . .

“And while we were yet in the Spirit, the Lord commanded us that we should write the vision” (D&C 76:12, 19–24, 28).

These students are prepared, too, to understand what Moses meant when he declared:

“But now mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him” (Moses 1:11).

These students are prepared to believe and understand that all these things are matters of faith, not to be explained or understood by any process of human reason, and probably not by any experiment of known physical science.

These students (to put the matter shortly) are prepared to understand and to believe that there is a natural world and there is a spiritual world; that the things of the natural world will not explain the things of the spiritual world; that the things of the spiritual world cannot be understood or comprehended by the things of the natural world; that you cannot rationalize the things of the Spirit, because first, the things of the Spirit are not sufficiently known and comprehended, and secondly, because finite mind and reason cannot comprehend nor explain infinite wisdom and ultimate truth.

These students already know that they must be “honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and [do] good to all men” and that “if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13)—these things they have been taught from very birth. They should be encouraged in all proper ways to do these things which they know to be true, but they do not need to have a year’s course of instruction to make them believe and know them.

These students fully sense the hollowness of teachings that would make the gospel plan a mere system of ethics. They know that Christ’s teachings are in the highest degree ethical, but they also know they are more than this. They will see that ethics relate primarily to the doings of this life, and that to make of the gospel a mere system of ethics is to confess a lack of faith, if not a disbelief, in the hereafter. They know that the gospel teachings not only touch this life, but the life that is to come, with its salvation and exaltation as the final goal.

These students hunger and thirst, as did their fathers before them, for a testimony of the things of the Spirit and of the hereafter, and knowing that you cannot

rationalize eternity, they seek faith and the knowledge which follows faith. They sense, by the Spirit they have, that the testimony they seek is engendered and nurtured by the testimony of others, and that to gain this testimony which they seek for, one living, burning, honest testimony of a righteous God-fearing man that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph was God's prophet, is worth a thousand books and lectures aimed at debasing the gospel to a system of ethics or seeking to rationalize infinity.

Two thousand years ago the Master said:

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

“Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?”
(Matthew 7:9–10).

These students, born under the covenant, can understand that age and maturity and intellectual training are not in any way or to any degree necessary to communion with the Lord and His Spirit. They know the story of the youth Samuel in the temple, of Jesus at twelve years confounding the doctors in the temple, of Joseph at fourteen seeing God the Father and the Son in one of the most glorious visions ever beheld by man. They are not as were the Corinthians, of whom Paul said:

“I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able”
(1 Corinthians 3:2).

They are rather as was Paul himself when he declared to the same Corinthians:

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11).

These students as they come to you are spiritually working on toward a maturity which they will early reach if you but feed them the right food. They come to you possessing spiritual knowledge and experience the world does not know.

So much for your students and what they are and what they expect and what they are capable of. I am telling you the things that some of you teachers have told me, and that many of your youth have told me.

May I now say a few words to you teachers? In the first place, there is neither reason nor is there excuse for our Church religious teaching and training facilities and institutions unless the youth are to be taught and trained in the principles of the gospel, embracing therein the two great elements that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph was God's prophet. The teaching of a system of ethics to the students is not a sufficient reason for running our seminaries and institutes. The great public school system teaches ethics. The students of seminaries and institutes

should of course be taught the ordinary canons of good and righteous living, for these are part, and an essential part, of the gospel. But there are the great principles involved in eternal life, the priesthood, the Resurrection, and many like other things, that go way beyond these canons of good living. These great fundamental principles also must be taught to the youth; they are the things the youth wish first to know about.

The first requisite of a teacher for teaching these principles is a personal testimony of their truth. No amount of learning, no amount of study, and no number of scholastic degrees can take the place of this testimony, which is the *sine qua non* of the teacher in our Church school system. No teacher who does not have a real testimony of the truth of the gospel as revealed to and believed by the Latter-day Saints, and a testimony of the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus, and of the divine mission of Joseph Smith—including, in all its reality, the First Vision—has any place in the Church school system. If there be any such, and I hope and pray there are none, he should at once resign; if the Commissioner knows of any such and he does not resign, the Commissioner should request his resignation. The First Presidency expect this pruning to be made.

This does not mean that we would cast out such teachers from the Church—not at all. We shall take up with them a labor of love, in all patience and long-suffering, to win them to the knowledge to which as God-fearing men and women they are entitled. But this does mean that our Church schools cannot be manned by unconverted, untestimonied teachers.

But for you teachers the mere possession of a testimony is not enough. You must have, besides this, one of the rarest and most precious of all the many elements of human character—moral courage. For in the absence of moral courage to declare your testimony, it will reach the students only after such dilution as will make it difficult if not impossible for them to detect it; and the spiritual and psychological effect of a weak and vacillating testimony may well be actually harmful instead of helpful.

The successful seminary or institute teacher must also possess another of the rare and valuable elements of character, a twin brother of moral courage and often mistaken for it. I mean intellectual courage—the courage to affirm principles, beliefs, and faith that may not always be considered as harmonizing with such knowledge, scientific or otherwise, as the teacher or his educational colleagues may believe they possess.

Not unknown are cases where men of presumed faith, holding responsible positions, have felt that, since by affirming their full faith they might call down upon themselves the ridicule of their unbelieving colleagues,

they must either modify or explain away their faith, or destructively dilute it, or even pretend to cast it away. Such are hypocrites to their colleagues and to their co-religionists.

An object of pity (not of scorn, as some would have it) is that man or woman who, having the truth and knowing it, finds it necessary either to repudiate the truth or to compromise with error in order that he may live with or among unbelievers without subjecting himself to their disfavor or derision as he supposes. Tragic indeed is his place, for the real fact is that all such discardings and shadings in the end bring the very punishments that the weak-willed one sought to avoid. For there is nothing the world so values and reveres as the man who, having righteous convictions, stands for them in any and all circumstances; there is nothing toward which the world turns more contempt than the man who, having righteous convictions, either slips away from them, abandons them, or repudiates them. For any Latter-day Saint psychologist, chemist, physicist, geologist, archeologist, or any other scientist, to explain away, or misinterpret, or evade or elude, or most of all, to repudiate or to deny the great fundamental doctrines of the Church in which he professes to believe, is to give the lie to his intellect, to lose his self-respect, to bring sorrow to his friends, to break the hearts and bring shame to his parents, to besmirch the Church and its members, and to forfeit the respect and honor of those whom he has sought, by his course, to win as friends and helpers.

I prayerfully hope there may not be any such among the teachers of the Church school system, but if there are any such, high or low, they must travel the same route as the teacher without the testimony. Sham and pretext and evasion and hypocrisy have, and can have, no place in the Church school system or in the character building and spiritual growth of our youth.

Another thing that must be watched in our Church institutions is this: It must not be possible for men to keep positions of spiritual trust who, not being converted themselves, being really unbelievers, seek to turn aside the beliefs, education, and activities of our youth, and our aged also, from the ways they should follow into other paths of education, beliefs, and activities which (though leading where the unbeliever would go) do not bring us to places where the gospel would take us. That this works as a conscience-balm to the unbeliever who directs it is of no importance. This is the grossest betrayal of trust; and there is too much reason to think it has happened.

I wish to mention another thing that has happened in other lines, as a caution against the same thing happening in the Church Educational System. On more than one occasion our Church members have gone to other places for special training in particular lines. They have had the training

which was supposedly the last word, the most modern view, the *ne plus ultra* of up-to-dateness; then they have brought it back and dosed it upon us without any thought as to whether we needed it or not. I refrain from mentioning well-known and, I believe, well-recognized instances of this sort of thing. I do not wish to wound any feelings.

But before trying on the newest fangled ideas in any line of thought, education, activity, or what not, experts should just stop and consider that however backward they think we are, and however backward we may actually be in some things, in other things we are far out in the lead, and therefore these new methods may be old, if not worn out, with us.

In whatever relates to community life and activity in general, to clean group social amusement and entertainment, to closely knit and carefully directed religious worship and activity, to a positive, clear-cut, faith-promoting spirituality, to a real, everyday, practical religion, to a firm-fixed desire and acutely sensed need for faith in God, we are far in the van of on-marching humanity. Before effort is made to inoculate us with new ideas, experts should kindly consider whether the methods used to spur community spirit or build religious activities among groups that are decadent and maybe dead to these things are quite applicable to us, and whether their effort to impose these upon us is not a rather crude, even gross anachronism.

For example, to apply to our spiritually minded and religiously alert youth a plan evolved to teach religion to youth having no interest or concern in matters of the Spirit would not only fail in meeting our actual religious needs, but would tend to destroy the best qualities which our youth now possess.

I have already indicated that our youth are not children spiritually; they are well on toward the normal spiritual maturity of the world. To treat them as children spiritually, as the world might treat the same age group, is therefore and likewise an anachronism. I say once more, 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. 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, in their natural guise. Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches, for "bedtime" stories, for coddling, for patronizing, or for any of the other childish devices used

in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperienced and all but spiritually dead.

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. Not only time but eternity is your field. Salvation of yourself not only, but of those who come within the purlieu of your temple is the blessing you seek, and which, doing your duty, you will gain. How brilliant will be your crown of glory, with each soul saved an encrusted jewel thereon.

But to get this blessing and to be so crowned, you must, I say once more, you must teach the gospel. You have no other function and no other reason for your presence in a Church school system.

You do have an interest in matters purely cultural and in matters of purely secular knowledge, but, I repeat again for emphasis, 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 intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you to be. To do so would be to have as many different churches as we have seminaries—and that is chaos.

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 Lord has declared that he is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (2 Nephi 27:23).

I urge you not to fall into that childish error, so common now, of believing that merely because man has gone so far in harnessing the forces of nature and turning them to his own use that therefore the truths of the Spirit have been changed or transformed. It is a vital and significant fact that man’s conquest of the things of the Spirit has not marched side by side with his conquest of things material. The opposite sometimes seems to be true. Man’s power to reason has not matched his power to figure. Remember always and cherish the great truth of the Intercessory Prayer:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

This is an ultimate truth; so are all spiritual truths. They are not changed by the discovery of a new element, a new

ethereal wave, nor by clipping off a few seconds, minutes, or hours of a speed record.

You are not to teach the philosophies of the world, ancient or modern, pagan or Christian, for this is the field of the public schools. Your sole field is the gospel, and that is boundless in its own sphere.

We pay taxes to support those state institutions whose function and work it is to teach the arts, the sciences, literature, history, the languages, and so on through the whole secular curriculum. These institutions are to do this work. But we use the tithes of the Church to carry on the Church school system, and these are impressed with a holy trust. The Church seminaries and institutes are to teach the gospel.

In thus stating this function time and time again, and with such continued insistence as I have done, it is fully appreciated that carrying out the function may involve the matter of “released time” for our seminaries and institutes. But our course is clear. If we cannot teach the gospel, the doctrines of the Church, and the standard works of the Church, all of them, on “released time” in our seminaries and institutes, then we must face giving up “released time” and try to work out some other plan of carrying on the gospel work in those institutions. If to work out some other plan be impossible, we shall face the abandonment of the seminaries and institutes and the return to Church colleges and academies. We are not now sure, in the light of developments, that these should ever have been given up.

We are clear upon this point, namely, that we shall not feel justified in appropriating one further tithing dollar to the upkeep of our seminaries and institutes of religion unless they can be used to teach the gospel in the manner prescribed. The tithing represents too much toil, too much self-denial, too much sacrifice, too much faith, to be used for the colorless instruction of the youth of the Church in elementary ethics. This decision and situation must be faced when the next budget is considered. In saying this, I am speaking for the First Presidency.

All that has been said regarding the character of religious teaching, and the results which in the very nature of things must follow a failure properly to teach the gospel, applies with full and equal force to seminaries, to institutes, and to any and every other educational institution belonging to the Church school system.

The First Presidency earnestly solicit the wholehearted help and cooperation of all you men and women who, from your work on the firing line, know so well the greatness of the problem that faces us and which so vitally and intimately affects the spiritual health and the salvation of our youth, as also the future welfare of the whole Church. We need you; the Church needs you; the

Lord needs you. Restrain not yourselves, nor withhold your helping hand.

In closing, I wish to pay a humble but sincere tribute to teachers. Having worked my own way through school—high school, college, and professional school—I know something of the hardship and sacrifice this demands; but I know also the growth and satisfaction that come as we reach the end. So I stand here with a knowledge of how many, perhaps most of you, have come to your present place. Furthermore, for a time I tried, without much success, to teach school, so I know also the feelings of those of us teachers who do not make the first grade and must rest in the lower ones.

I know the present amount of actual compensation you get and how very sparse it is—far, far too sparse. I wish from the bottom of my heart we could make it greater; but the drain on the Church income is already so great for education that I must in honesty say there is no immediate prospect for betterment. Our budget for this school year is \$860,000, or almost 17 percent of the estimated total cost of running the whole Church, including general administration, stakes, wards, branches, and mission expenses, for all purposes, including welfare and charities. Indeed, I wish I felt sure that the prosperity of the people would be so ample that they could and would certainly pay tithes enough to keep us going as we are.

So I pay my tribute to your industry, your loyalty, your sacrifice, your willing eagerness for service in the cause of truth, your faith in God and in His work, and your earnest

desire to do the things that our ordained leader and prophet would have you do. And I entreat you not to make the mistake of thrusting aside your leader's counsel, or of failing to carry out his wish, or of refusing to follow his direction. David of old, privily cutting off only the skirt of Saul's robe, uttered the cry of a smitten heart:

"The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord" (1 Samuel 24:6).

May God bless you always in all your righteous endeavors. May He quicken your understanding, increase your wisdom, enlighten you by experience, bestow upon you patience, charity, and, as among your most precious gifts, endow you with the discernment of spirits that you may certainly know the spirit of righteousness and its opposite as they come to you. May He give you entrance to the hearts of those you teach and then make you know that as you enter there you stand in holy places that must be neither polluted nor defiled, either by false or corrupting doctrine or by sinful misdeed. May He enrich your knowledge with the skill and power to teach righteousness. May your faith and your testimonies increase, and your ability to encourage and foster them in others grow greater every day—all that the youth of Zion may be taught, built up, encouraged, heartened, that they may not fall by the wayside, but go on to eternal life, that these blessings coming to them, you through them may be blessed also. And I pray all this in the name of Him who died that we might live, the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ, amen.

THE ONE PURE DEFENSE

**PRESIDENT BOYD K.
PACKER**

**ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE
QUORUM OF THE TWELVE
APOSTLES**

*An Evening with President
Boyd K. Packer, 6 February 2004*

World War II stopped as suddenly as it had begun five years earlier. All at once, I had something I was not sure I would have. I had a future.

It was a strange feeling. What does one do with a future?

I was on Ie Shima, a tiny speck of an island off the northwest coast of Okinawa. A few days earlier the island had been destroyed by a typhoon of such ferocious power that large ships went down and planes were blown off the



island. The storm was passed, and the war was over, and I had a future.

One calm, clear, moonlit night, I sat alone on a cliff high above the beach. Only a few days before, the ocean, so calm now, sent immense waves crashing over the top of that cliff. I sat for hours pondering and praying. I decided what to do with my future. I would be a teacher.

I had a high school diploma earned with very average grades. I had a burning witness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I had some knowledge of the scriptures from hours and days and weeks and months of study. I did not know what I would teach. I could learn practical and secular subjects.

I struggled through college. That was shortened by a year because of credits in aeronautics granted for service as an Air Force pilot. I had a college degree in education, and of consummate importance, I had a wife and two little boys.

Suddenly I was a seminary teacher hired midyear to replace John P. Lillywhite, who was called out of the classroom to preside over the Netherlands Mission. I knew what to do with my future.

I had no idea that I would be here now speaking to teachers. I was content then, and I would be content now, to be a classroom teacher. And my wife would be content to join me.

Knowing what I know now, I do not expect in the field of destiny to be rewarded for my present calling above those of you I have known who wore out your lives one day at a time teaching in the classroom.

But we are here. I say *we*, for my wife is with me. We do not know how many years are allotted us. Not a great number, I would think. But we have sure testimonies of the Father and the Son and the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost.

We know also that the being from the unseen world who confronted the boy Joseph in the Sacred Grove is always near, for as Peter said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Now, by moral and social and political and even intellectual standards, we seem to be losing. But mankind also knows that in the final windup scene Satan cannot win.

There are over forty thousand of you here in this meeting. Measured against the need, that really is not a great number. But I remember hearing Sir Winston Churchill say in the darkest hours of World War II, speaking of a handful of Royal Air Force pilots facing almost insurmountable odds, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."¹

In October of 1983, I returned from South America and left almost immediately for London to join Elder Neal A. Maxwell at the first regional conference as a substitute for one of the First Presidency. This first conference was something of an experiment.

We met in the Hyde Park Chapel for a four-hour priesthood meeting. Elder Maxwell spoke first, quoting King Benjamin, "Brethren, we did not come here to trifle with words" (see Mosiah 2:9). What he said next changed my life: "We come to you today in our true identity as Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Suddenly my body was filled with warmth and light. The weariness of travel was replaced by confidence and confirmation. What we were doing was approved of the Lord.

I have never forgotten that moment, much like moments of inspiration each of you has experienced. Such moments confirm that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

BOOK OF MEMORY

As I prepared to meet you here tonight, I had great difficulty in keeping my book of memory closed.

I remember tall, smiling J. Wiley Sessions, who opened the first institute of religion at Moscow, Idaho.

Thomas J. Yates, an engineer at a power plant in the mountains east of Salt Lake City, rode a horse down the canyon each day to teach at the first released-time seminary, Granite. I did not know Brother Yates, but I remember those who replaced him.

Abel S. Rich, an agriculture teacher, was hired to go across the street from the high school in Brigham City to an adobe home to open the second released-time seminary. He was serving as principal when Elder A. Theodore Tuttle and I taught there together.

Brother Tuttle had been a lieutenant in the Marines. At Iwo Jima he returned to the ship to get a large flag. On shore he handed it to a runner who took it to the top of Mount Sirabachi and on to the pages of history.

Before Brother Tuttle and I were called as General Authorities, we taught together in the same building where I had attended seminary and then worked together as supervisors of seminaries and institutes of religion. They were administered by William E. Berrett.

Brother Berrett had opened the seminary in the Uintah Basin. During the summer he walked from town to town recruiting students for his class. Their first child was born and buried there. Brother and Sister Berrett rode to the cemetery in the backseat of a car. On his lap was the little wooden, unpainted casket he had built.

I knew Elijah Hicken, who was sent to the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming to open the seminary. He was not welcomed by a very rough crowd. A group threatened his life. The patriarch came with a blessing and a promise that his life would be protected. On the strength of that blessing, Brother Hicken took off the six-shooter he had worn to class each day.

In the 1950s we established stake boards of education. The story was told, quite possibly true, that one seminary teacher had a little difficulty convincing the stake leaders of the need to study the scriptures.

He decided to give them a quiz to test their scriptural knowledge. The first question was, "Who knocked down the walls of Jericho?" That opened something of a debate.

Finally the stake president said, "Oh, what difference does it make who knocked down the walls? Just get them put back up! We'll pay for it out of stake funds."

In England I attended a sacrament meeting. The seminary teacher, speaking on the subject of the scriptures, said,

“I will now turn to Mosiah chapter 3 in the Doctrine and Covenants.” No one laughed. I knew we still had work to do.

When I first taught seminary, we had three textbooks—one each for Old Testament, New Testament, and Church history. In Brigham City we added a class in the Book of Mormon.

The Old Testament textbook was out of print and very hard to find. When the monthly faculty group meeting was held in our building, we hid our textbooks. If we did not, these precious books would disappear.

We had a record player that played fourteen-inch Bible stories. We did not have a projector in the class.

CURRICULUM

Now you have course outlines, visual aids, equipment, and buildings. All are superior to anything before available.

Your curriculum is the same—the scriptures: the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price. Other sources come from the living prophets and apostles. We are told in the revelation, when inspired by the Holy Ghost, their words take on the stature of scripture (see D&C 1:38).

BE ON ALERT

Now, again from my book of memories:

In the early 1930s, there grew up in some of the institutes a so-called superior scholarship. Secular approval, they thought, would bring more acceptance from those with whom they associated at the universities.

This attitude infected a number in the seminaries. Some work actually went forward to produce a curriculum focused on contemporary social values rather than revealed doctrine and scripture.

Several of the teachers went to obtain advanced degrees under eminent Bible scholars. They sought learning “out of the best books” (see D&C 88:118; 109:7, 14), but with too little faith. They came back having won their degrees but having lost touch with, and perhaps interest in, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

This pulling at the moorings by some teachers of religion did not go unnoticed in the councils of the Church. The Brethren became concerned. In 1938 all seminary and institute personnel were assembled for summer school at Aspen Grove.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr., speaking for the First Presidency, delivered a monumental address, “The Charted Course of the Church in Education.”² It is as much an anchor today as it was the day that it was given.

Surely you have read and do reread that charter. Now tonight as your teacher, I assign you to read it again. That is your homework.

I knew virtually all of those men who drifted off course. They found themselves in conflict with the simple things of the gospel. Some of them left and went on to prominent careers in secular education where they felt more comfortable. One by one they found their way outside Church activity and a few of them outside the Church. With each went a following of students—a terrible price to pay.

Over the years I have watched. Their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren are not numbered among the faithful in the Church.

That same thing happened again. In 1954 the seminary and institute teachers were called to a summer school at Brigham Young University. Elder Harold B. Lee of the Quorum of the Twelve was our teacher. For two hours a day, five days a week for five weeks, Elder Lee and others of the Twelve taught us. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. spoke to us twice. That pulled us back on course.

Happily, though, most of those who went away to study returned magnified by their experience and armed with advanced degrees. They returned firm in their knowledge that a man can be in the world but not of the world (see John 17:14–19).

Be careful! Without watch care such things can and have happened again. Each of you must be on alert. If you feel drawn to others who regard intellectual achievement to be more important than the fundamental doctrines, or who expose their students to the so-called realities of life, back away.

IN HARM’S WAY

When I was a boy, childhood diseases appeared regularly in every community. When someone had chicken pox or measles or mumps, the county health officer would visit the home and tack on the porch or put in the window a quarantine sign to warn everyone to stay away. In a large family such as ours, those childhood diseases would visit the home by relay, one child getting it from another, so the sign might stay up for many weeks.

When I was in junior high school in a health class, the teacher read an article. A mother learned that the neighbor children had chicken pox. She faced the probability that her children would have it as well, perhaps one at a time. She determined to get it all over with at once.

So she sent her children to the neighbor’s to play with their children to let them be exposed, and then be done with it. Imagine her horror when the doctor finally came

and announced that it was not chicken pox the children had; it was smallpox.

“TEACH THEM THE WORD OF GOD”

Now, I close the book of memories and come to here and now.

I come to you as did Jacob when he taught in the temple, “having first obtained mine errand from the Lord” (Jacob 1:17). Jacob and his brother Joseph had been consecrated priests and *teachers* over the people.

“And [they] did magnify [their] office unto the Lord, taking upon [themselves] the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon [their] own heads if [they] did not teach them the word of God with all diligence” (Jacob 1:19).

The world and the Christian churches have discarded the Old Testament, but it is there we find the nuggets of doctrine—such words as *Aaronic, Melchizedek, priesthood, patriarch, Jehovah, ordinance, covenants*, and so many more. They form essential links in our understanding of the plan of redemption.

From the New Testament the students learn the life and teachings of the Master.

Teach your students of the Apostasy and the Restoration of the priesthood, of Joseph Smith and the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by the Lord’s own declaration, “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30).

Immerse them in the truths of the Book of Mormon. That will lead them to the test and to the promise that is there, and then they will be armed with the protective influence of the truth.

Each individual can then “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true,” as the Book of Mormon invites them to do. Teach them to ask “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, [and God] will manifest the truth of it unto [them], by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost [they] may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:4–5).

With an individual testimony, they will be safe in the world.

MUCH DEPENDS ON YOU

The world is spiraling downward at an ever-quickening pace. I am sorry to tell you that it will not get better.

It is my purpose to *charge* each of you as *teachers* with the responsibility—to put you on alert. These are days of great spiritual danger for our youth.

MORALLY MIXED-UP WORLD

I know of nothing in the history of the Church or in the history of the world to compare with our present circumstances. Nothing happened in Sodom and Gomorrah which exceeds in wickedness and depravity that which surrounds us now.

Words of profanity, vulgarity, and blasphemy are heard everywhere. Unspeakable wickedness and perversion were once hidden in dark places; now they are in the open, even accorded legal protection.

At Sodom and Gomorrah these things were localized. Now they are spread across the world, and they are among us.

I need not—I will not—identify each evil that threatens our youth. It is difficult for man to get away from it.

THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

You, with the leaders and teachers in the priesthood and auxiliaries, are not the first line of defense. The family holds that line. Satan uses every intrigue to disrupt the family.

The sacred relationship between man and woman, husband and wife, through which mortal bodies are conceived and life is passed to the next generation, is being showered with filth.

Surely you can see what the adversary is about. The first line of defense, the home, is crumbling.

The very purpose for the Restoration centers on the sealing authority, the temple ordinances, baptism for the dead, eternal marriage, eternal increase—centers on the family!

The Lord placed the responsibility upon parents first, saying: “Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. . . .

“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:25, 28).

There is “the shield of faith wherewith” the Lord said “ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:17).

THE ARMOR IS FITTED AT HOME

This shield of faith is handmade in a cottage industry. What is most worth doing ideally is done at home. It can

be polished in the classroom, but it is fabricated and fitted in the home, handcrafted to each individual.

Many do not have support in the family. When that shield is not provided at home, we must, and we can, build it. You and the leaders and teachers then become the first line of defense.

THE PROPHETS HAVE WARNED

We are now exactly where the prophets warned we would be.

In preparation for what is coming, the Lord warned, “In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation” (D&C 89:4).

Moroni spoke to us: “O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you. . . .

“Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation” (Ether 8:23–24).

Paul prophesied, “In the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Timothy 3:1), then word by word and phrase by phrase, described exactly what our present conditions are now. He spoke of:

“Blasphemers, disobedient to parents, . . . unholy,

“Without natural affection, . . . incontinent, . . . despisers of those that are good,

“. . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; . . .

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,” and other things (2 Timothy 3:2–4, 7).

Could he have described our plight more accurately? Read the prophecy very carefully.

THE POWER OF SCRIPTURES

Paul prophesied, also, that things will not get better. “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

Fortunately, he told us what to do about it: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:14–16).

In His supernal prayer for the Apostles, the Lord said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:15–17).

A WORLD SPIRITUALLY DISEASED

Spiritual diseases of epidemic proportion sweep over the world. We are not able to curb them. But we can prevent our youth from being infected by them.

Knowledge and a testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are like a vaccine. We can inoculate them.

Inoculate: In—“to be within” and *oculate* means “eye to see.” We place an eye within them—the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost.

Nephi told us that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you *all things* what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3; emphasis added).

NARROW WAY

It is a very narrow and straight path laid out for you teachers.

“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14).

Your path as teachers may be broadened to include some worthy activities and cultural events. Activities are like spices and desserts that flavor a balanced meal. These must always be of the standard to reflect the gospel. Do not leave out the nourishing nutrients that build the spirit; it is not the entertainment that protects them.

The teaching of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ *must not* be regarded as just one among your offerings. It is more important than any or all of the activities put together. You may provide them activities, but you must not leave the teaching undone.

The auxiliaries have been organized and have the responsibility for most of the activities. Teach your students to be faithful and active in the wards and branches and stakes, to have a deep regard for the priesthood leaders called to preside over them.

I repeat, the way is straight and narrow. You must not wander from it.

HAVE FAITH—COURAGE

When our youth feel surrounded and outnumbered, remember what Elisha told his servant when he saw that “an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots.” The servant was frightened and said, “Alas, my master! how shall we do?”

“[Elisha] answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

“And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire” (2 Kings 6:15–17).

You are *not* responsible to cure the world’s environment. You can, with parents and priesthood and auxiliary leaders and teachers, send young Latter-day Saints out as leaven into the world, spiritually nourished, immunized to the influences of evil.

“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

“Light and truth forsake that evil one. . . .

“[You are] commanded . . . to bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:36–37, 40).

A DEFENSE AND A REFUGE

“The gathering together upon the land of Zion,” the Lord said, “and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:6).

They need not fear. *We* need not fear. Fear is the opposite of faith.

I have been in the councils of the Church and seen many things. I have seen disappointment and shock and concern. Never once have I seen any fear.

Our youth can look forward with hope for a happy life. They shall marry and raise families in the Church and teach their little ones what you have taught them. They, in turn, will teach their children and their grandchildren.

Isaiah and Micah prophesied: “It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3; see also Micah 4:1–2).

In our day the house of the Lord *has* been established in the tops of the mountains, and nations *do* flow unto it. The word of the Lord—the Old and New Testaments—has gone forth from Jerusalem. Now the law goes forth from Zion. And you are teachers of the law.

WE WILL NOT FAIL

We will not fail!

“How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints” (D&C 121:33).

It has been fifty-nine years since I sat on that cliff on that tiny speck of an island in the Pacific Ocean and decided to be a teacher. I knew then that a teacher would not be rewarded with wealth; the reward is more lasting.

During those years, whole nations have been born and died as the evil one has worked his will. I have seen the borders of Zion enlarged to cover the whole earth (see D&C 82:14; 107:74).

I do not know now any more surely that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, than I did then as a soldier boy sitting on the cliff on that tiny speck of an island. There is one difference—now I know the Lord.

I bear witness of Him and invoke His blessings upon you who teach, as fathers and mothers, as grandfathers and grandmothers, upon your families, upon your classes, upon your work. I bless you that His power and inspiration will follow you in such a way that those who come within your influence will have that protective testimony born within them. I invoke this blessing upon you as a servant of the Lord and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Extract from a speech by Winston Churchill, 20 August 1940 (Churchill Papers).
2. See *The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. (pamphlet, 1994); item 32709.

“A TEACHER COME FROM GOD”

ELDER JEFFREY R.
HOLLAND

OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from Conference Report, April 1998, 30–34; or Ensign, May 1998, 25–27

When Nicodemus came to Jesus early in the Savior’s ministry, he spoke for all of us when he said, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God.” [John 3:2.]



Christ was, of course, much more than a teacher. He was the very Son of God, the Holy One of the eternal gospel plan, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

But Nicodemus was starting about the way you and I started, the way any child or young student or new convert begins—by recognizing and responding to a thrilling teacher who touches the innermost feelings of our heart.

INSPIRED INSTRUCTION NOURISHES MEMBERS

In recent months President Gordon B. Hinckley has called on us to hold our people close to the Church, especially the newly converted member. In issuing this call President Hinckley has reminded that we all need at least three things to remain firmly in the faith—a friend, a responsibility, and “[nourishing] by the good word of God.” [Moroni 6:4; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 66; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.] . . .

The Apostle Paul taught:

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

“[But] how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? . . .

“. . . *Faith cometh by hearing*, and hearing by the word of God.” [Romans 10:13–14, 17; italics added.]

REVITALIZE SUPERIOR TEACHING

Now, at a time when our prophet is calling for more faith through hearing the word of God, we must revitalize and reenthroned superior teaching in the Church—at home, from the pulpit, in our administrative meetings, and surely in the classroom. Inspired teaching must never become a lost art in the Church, and we must make certain our quest for it does not become a lost tradition.

President Spencer W. Kimball once pled: “Stake presidents, bishops, and branch presidents, please take a particular interest in improving the quality of teaching in the Church. . . . I fear,” he said, “that all too often many of our members come to church, sit through a class or a meeting, and . . . then return home having been largely [uninspired]. It is especially unfortunate when this happens at a time . . . of stress, temptation, or crisis [in their life]. We all need to be touched and nurtured by the Spirit,” he said, “and *effective teaching* is one of the most important ways this can happen. We often do vigorous . . . work,” President Kimball concluded, “to get members to come to Church but then do not adequately watch over what they receive when they do come.” [*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 524; italics added.] On this subject President Hinckley himself has said, “*Effective teaching is the very essence of leadership in the Church.*” May I repeat that: “Effective teaching is the very essence of leadership in the Church. Eternal life,” President Hinckley continued, “will come only as men and women are *taught with such effectiveness* that they change and discipline their lives. They cannot be coerced into righteousness or into heaven. They must be led, and that means teaching.” [“How to Be a Teacher When Your Role as a Leader Requires You to Teach,” General Authority Priesthood Board Meeting, 5 Feb. 1969; italics added.]

Among the last words the Savior said to His disciples and among the first words He says to us today are: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . . . [Teach] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you [always], even unto the end of the world.” [Matthew 28:19–20.] To Peter, the apostolic leader of the Church, the resurrected and ascending Christ said, “Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Follow [thou] me.” [John 21:15–19.]

TEACH THE GOSPEL BY THE SPIRIT

In all of this we must remember that the Lord has never given more emphatic counsel to the Church than that we are to teach the gospel “by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth.”

Do we teach the gospel “by the Spirit of truth”? He has inquired. Or do we teach it “some other way? And if it be by some other way,” He warns, “it is not of God.” [D&C 50:14, 17–18.] In language echoing other commandments, He has said, “If ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.” [D&C 42:14.]

No eternal learning can take place without that quickening of the Spirit from heaven. So, parents, teachers, and leaders, we must face our tasks the way Moses faced the promised land. Knowing he could not succeed any other way, Moses said to Jehovah, “If thy

presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” [Exodus 33:15.]

That is what our members really want when they gather in a meeting or come into a classroom anyway. Most people don’t come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven. Those of us who are called upon to speak or teach or lead have an obligation to help provide that, as best we possibly can. We can only do that if we ourselves are striving to know God, if we ourselves are continually seeking the light of His Only Begotten Son. Then, if our hearts are right, if we are as clean as we can be, if we have prayed and wept and prepared and worried until we don’t know what more we can do, God can say to us as He did to Alma and the sons of Mosiah: “Lift up thy head and rejoice. . . . I will give unto you success.” [Alma 8:15; 26:27.]

NURTURING WITH THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD

. . . In times like ours we *all* need what Mormon called “the virtue of the word of God” because, he said, it “had [a] more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them.” [Alma 31:5.] When crises come in our lives—and they will—the philosophies of men interlaced with a few scriptures and poems just won’t do. Are we really nurturing our youth and our new members in a way that will sustain them when the stresses of life appear? Or are we giving them a kind of theological Twinkie—spiritually empty calories? President John Taylor once called such teaching “fried froth,” the kind of thing you could eat all day and yet finish feeling totally unsatisfied. [See John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 78.] During a severe winter several years ago, President Boyd K. Packer noted that a goodly number of deer had died of starvation while their stomachs were full of hay. In an honest effort to assist, agencies had supplied the superficial when the substantial was what had been needed. Regrettably they had *fed* the deer, but they had not *nourished* them.

I love what President J. Reuben Clark said of our youth well over a half century ago. The same thing can be said of new members. “[They] are hungry for the things of the spirit,” he said; “they are eager to learn the Gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. . . .

“ . . . You do not have to sneak up behind [them] and whisper religion in [their] ears; . . . you can bring these truths [out] openly.” [“The Charted Course of the Church in Education” (address given at Brigham Young

University Summer School in Aspen Grove, Utah, 8 Aug. 1938), 4, 9.]

Satan is certainly not subtle in his teachings; why should we be? Whether we are instructing our children at home or standing before an audience in church, let us *never* make our faith difficult to detect. Remember, we are to be teachers “come from God.” Never sow seeds of doubt. Avoid self-serving performance and vanity. Prepare lessons well. Give scripturally based sermons. Teach the revealed doctrine. Bear heartfelt testimony. Pray and practice and try to improve. In our administrative meetings let us both “instruct and edify” as the revelations say, that even in these our teaching may ultimately be “from on high.” [D&C 43:8, 16.] The Church will be the better for it, and so will you, for as Paul said to the Romans, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” [Romans 2:21.]

JEREMIAH’S EXAMPLE

A memorable account of the power of such teaching comes from the life of the prophet Jeremiah. This great man felt the way most teachers or speakers or Church officers feel when called—inexperienced, inadequate, frightened. “Ah, Lord,” he cried, “behold, I cannot speak: for I am [but] a child.”

But the Lord reassured him: “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee. . . . Therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them.” [Jeremiah 1:6, 8, 17.]

So speak unto them he did, but initially not with much success. Things went from bad to worse until finally he was imprisoned and made a laughingstock among the people. Angry that he had been so mistreated and maligned, Jeremiah vowed, in effect, never to teach another lesson, whether that be to an investigator, Primary child, new convert, or—heaven forbid—the 15-year-olds. “I will not make mention of [the Lord], nor speak any more in his name,” the discouraged prophet said. But then came the turning point of Jeremiah’s life. Something had been happening with every testimony he had borne, every scripture he had read, every truth he had taught. Something had been happening that he hadn’t counted on. Even as he vowed to close his mouth and walk away from the Lord’s work, he found that he could not. Why? Because “his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” [See Jeremiah 20:7–9.]

ALL CAN BE TEACHERS “COME FROM GOD”

That is what happens in the gospel to both the teacher and the taught. It is what happened to Nephi and Lehi

when, the book of Helaman says, “the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words.” [Helaman 5:45.] Surely it must have been that kind of heavenly joy Mary Magdalene experienced when near the Garden Tomb she unexpectedly beheld her beloved resurrected Lord and said to Him simply, “Rabboni,” which is to say, literally, “Teacher.” [John 20:16; see footnote *a* to Greek.]

From all of us who have been taught to all of you who teach—we say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.

A CHALLENGING TIME—A WONDERFUL TIME

**PRESIDENT GORDON B.
HINCKLEY**

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

*An Evening with President
Gordon B. Hinckley, 7 February
2003*

My dear brethren and sisters,
I come to you with love and
appreciation and respect.
I am grateful for what Elder
Eyring has said and commend
his words to you.



I think I need not tell you that you occupy a very unique and important responsibility in this Church. We thank every one of you for your dedicated service. I wish to especially thank the institute men and your associates who have been of such great help in administering the Perpetual Education Fund.

In this gathering you represent various categories of teachers—faculty members from the three campuses of Brigham Young University, institute directors and instructors, and seminary teachers, both full-time and part-time, and those of the LDS Business College. But you are all engaged in one common endeavor, and that is to cultivate within the hearts of young people a love for the Savior of the world and a desire to follow His teachings.

The other evening we attended a concert given by various musical groups from BYU. It was wonderful. It was a great occasion. The performance was tremendous. There were about five hundred participants, all students.

As I looked at them I thought of what great young people they are. They showed such talent and all performed together in perfect harmony. Then I thought that every one of them is a student of yours, learning about this Church, its doctrine, its history, its practices. And I thought of what a great challenge this is for you to teach

May we exalt the teaching experience within the home and within the Church and improve our every effort to edify and instruct. In all of our meetings and all of our messages may we nourish by the good word of God. And may our children and new converts, our neighbors and new friends, say of our honest efforts, “Thou art a teacher come from God.” In the sacred name of the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, amen.

in such a way as to not only instruct but, more importantly, to inspire.

As I watched them, I imagined the many thousands of others who come under your leadership in institutes of religion at other universities and colleges across the world. Then I thought of the seminaries you represent, both as career teachers and as volunteers. I think there is nothing like it to be found anywhere.

Do you really realize what each of you is a part of—this huge effort to teach religion to young people in many nations, speaking scores of languages? Literally, the sun never sets on groups of students who gather together to learn of the Lord and His great work. I compliment you most warmly. I thank you with all of my heart. I encourage you to work at it a little harder. I pray for your success and also for your satisfaction with what you are doing.

You have no idea of the consequences of your service. As the years pass and your youthful students pursue their various endeavors, marry, and rear families, recollections of what they learned in seminary and institute will guide their decisions and prompt their activities.

I knew a man who stood at the head of a large business institution. His wife was a member of the Church. He was not. But each morning he would arise early and drive their children to early-morning seminary. For a time he would sit in the car and wait for them. Then the weather turned cold. He went inside and sat in the back of the room where the class met. He was intrigued with the lessons given by a woman who was the volunteer teacher. He began to do on his own what his wife had been unable to get him to do. He studied the gospel. He was baptized and became a faithful and active member of the Church. He made a tremendous contribution.

YOU HAVE A CHALLENGING AND WONDERFUL RESPONSIBILITY

Yours is not an easy task. I had a taste of it at one time. Pardon me if I give you a little personal history.

I was called on a mission to the British Isles in 1933. I had completed my baccalaureate work at the University of Utah. I was older than most missionaries are today.

Very few were going out at the time. The terrible Depression gripped the entire world. Money was extremely scarce. There were only sixty-five of us in all of the British Isles, where today there are perhaps twelve hundred.

The two years I spent in England were very productive in terms of my development. Most of that time was spent in London as assistant to the president of the European Mission. He was a member of the Council of the Twelve. When I was released to come home, he asked that I meet with the First Presidency to tell them of some of the needs of the missions in Europe. He had written to pave the way.

Elder John A. Widtsoe had previously served as president of the European Mission and at the time was Church Commissioner of Education. He invited me to try something. He asked that I go down to South High School in Salt Lake City and teach seminary after school five days a week, for which I would be paid \$35 a month.

I met with the First Presidency, and they invited me to begin the public relations work in the Church under the direction of a committee of six of the Council of the Twelve. For this work I would receive \$65 a month, making \$100 a month total between the two jobs. You are not so poorly paid after all.

I count it one of the great accomplishments of my life that I was able to pull through a full class of students who came over to our building each afternoon after school. They stayed with me through the school year. It was a taxing, challenging, and wonderful responsibility. I worked at it. I prayed about it. I gave it my very best, and I felt it was extremely rewarding.

When that year was completed, the CES people importuned me to teach full-time seminary. The committee of the Twelve, likewise, who had a little more authority, asked that I now give my full time to the work. I had to make a choice. I chose to go with the Apostles.

I have been in the full-time service of the Church longer now than any man alive. I have also served in a number of the regular ecclesiastical positions, including that of stake president. I have been a General Authority now for forty-five years, and I am now in my twenty-second year as a member of the First Presidency and in my eighth year as President of the Church.

I have lived a long time, for which I am deeply grateful to the Lord. I have had rich and wonderful and rewarding experiences, for which I thank Him. I will always be grateful for the experience that I had as a seminary teacher. I am continuously grateful for the opportunity

that I have to serve as chairman of the Church Board of Education and of the BYU Board of Trustees, which keeps me in touch with this vital program. These are stewardships that are extremely important and meaningful and wonderfully challenging.

One measure of the importance we attach to the Church Educational System program is the fact that we spend more of the tithing funds of the Church on this than we do on the worldwide missionary program, the temple and family history program, or almost every other program except for the construction and maintenance of buildings.

In my youth I was the beneficiary of weekday gospel teaching. I attended the LDS High School, a large high school here in Salt Lake City which was operated by the Church until 1930. Here we had a wonderful faculty and a great student body, and each day we had religious education as a part of the regular curriculum. Our campus was right here, where today the Church Office Building and the Relief Society Building stand.

At that time an annual Boys' Day was held in Salt Lake City. There were three high schools in the city—East, West, and LDS. We would march down Main Street in a big parade on Boys' Day. And we of the LDS High School would laughingly chant as we marched, "A root-a-toot-toot. A root-a-toot-toot. We are the boys of the institute. We don't smoke and we don't chew and we don't go with boys who do."

Those were happy and wonderful days with great associations which I still treasure.

Many years have passed since then, seventy-five years to be exact, and how this world has changed! I look back and realize that I have lived through the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the war on terrorism. What a bloody history these years have encompassed.

And what a frightening change has occurred in our culture. A great flood of sleaze has gathered and is washing over us. Language is used on our campuses that never crossed our lips back in the days of my youth. Pornography with all of its titillating and vicious attraction is all about us. We have television, videos, DVDs, the Internet, and other means to deliver the filthy and the evil into our homes and lives. It is taking its toll. You, perhaps, are more aware of it than any other group of which I know. You are daily confronted with its results. This is the era of gutter-talk, of sloppy dress, of sloppy ways.

THIS IS A MARVELOUS GENERATION

At the same time, this is the season when so many of our youth show such remarkable strength and capacity and resolve to do the right thing. How marvelous is the

generation with which you deal. We have never had a generation its equal in all of the history of the Church. They are better educated. They are more familiar with the scriptures. I believe they pray with a greater measure of faith, have a greater desire to do the will of the Lord, are more active in the Church, go into the world as better prepared missionaries, and live to become better parents. It seems to me that the good are getting better and the bad are getting worse.

These are your students. You have both kinds. And yours is the tremendous challenge to give courage, and inspiration, and faith to those willing to accept, and to try with all the capacity that you can possibly have to hold on to those who are pulled with such pressure into those activities which will separate them from you and your better students.

YOU MUST TEACH MORALITY

You occupy a difficult role. Your chief responsibility is to teach doctrine and history, and I think you do this very well. You do not presume to occupy the place of the bishop or the place of parents, nor should you. It is their responsibility, primarily the parents, to nurture, to cultivate faith, to teach their children the ways of the Lord, to rear them in truth and righteousness. It is the bishop's responsibility to counsel with them, to interview them, to talk with them concerning their lives and their aspirations, to give them strength to stand against the world. And yet, inevitably, you too must teach morality and build within these young people the strength that will fortify them against the wily ways of the adversary.

Of course, sin is not unique to this generation. It has been in the world since Cain slew Abel. At one time conditions became so bad that the Lord felt compelled to cleanse the earth with a flood.

Through the ages the prophets were stoned and killed. The Redeemer of the world was crucified. His Apostles were put to death. The reformers were martyred. Joseph Smith was shot to death in Carthage Jail. From the founding of the Church our people have suffered so much and in so many ways. All of this has resulted from the work of the adversary.

But now there is a more clever element in his efforts. There are no longer burnings, and stonings, and drivings. There is a subtle and enticing invitation to leave the good and the beautiful and the holy and turn in the direction of the evil, the filthy, the sleazy, and the addictive ways of the world.

Music and entertainment are a part of this. For some reason that this old man cannot understand, the music of these off-color bands and entertainers is alluring and

attractive to our youth. There is no melody in it. There is no uplift. I see no beauty in it. But our young people are enthralled with it. They pay substantial ticket fees to get into these concerts, and they go by the thousands. Here they hop and swoon and act like animals. They are like animals. They are responding to their baser nature.

Tampering with drugs often follows. One thing leads to another until they are totally hooked. They cannot escape the bondage of drugs. Their lives are destroyed, except for the few who recognize their predicament and with great determination and the help of the Lord break the habit. But this is a painful process.

Pornography entices them. It comes in many forms, and they know all of these. Sex becomes a part of the whole picture. Among our own youth so many become entrapped.

I know a girl, a beautiful girl, whose parents sent her off to one of your institutions. She wanted to leave home, and they consented. She came back the other day to tell her mother that she was pregnant. Tears flowed. Anger flared. Pleading prayers were offered. A wedding followed, but it was not a wedding with happiness. It was simply an event designed to accommodate a tragic situation.

This is a circumstance which you know all too well. What can you do? What can you teach? How can you help with the desperate situation that confronts so many?

TEACH THEM TO PRAY AND TO WALK UPRIGHTLY

I am going to use only one verse of scripture today. It is the word of the Lord to parents. But it also applies to you. Said He: "Teach [them] to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:28).

I believe that brief mandate encompasses the most important things we can do.

First, teach them to pray—not in a self-righteous way, but as a response to the invitation from our Father in Heaven to speak with Him, to counsel with Him, to thank Him, to plead with Him for strength.

What a wonderful thing it will be if you can teach them in such a way that they will know that prayer is their refuge from sin, a certain source of strength to withstand evil, their promise of help if they will but seek that help.

Teach them to pray in the morning as they face the opportunities, the challenges, the temptations of the day. Teach them to pray in the evening to give thanks for the guidance, the strength, and the blessings of the Almighty upon their efforts. Teach them to kneel alone in prayer before they leave home on a date that they may remain in control of themselves, that they will so conduct themselves that the evening will provide a beautiful and wonderful experience and not something that can only bring later regret. Teach them to pray concerning

their studies, concerning their friends, concerning the direction their lives should take, concerning the future companions of which they dream.

Secondly, teach them to walk uprightly before the Lord. Teach them that there is an all-seeing eye that looks down upon us, that knows our hearts, that knows our thoughts, from which we cannot hide. When all is said and done, we must live with ourselves, with the knowledge that this eye is upon us.

Teach them always to walk the high road. In doing so they will walk uprightly with their Lord.

I know of no better admonition of the scripture than these few words that call us to pray and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

BE EXEMPLARS

And you, my dear brethren and sisters who serve as their teachers, it goes without saying that you must be their exemplars in praying and walking uprightly before the Lord.

I hope that you will plead with the Lord to give you strength, to give you capacity, to give you inspiration in teaching those who come before you for instruction. Your example will count for more than all of your words concerning Church history and doctrine.

Let them see in you the sweet fruits of a life well lived after the pattern of the Lord. Let your marriage be strong and solid and sweet and ennobling. Let your parenthood be an example of what they wish to be in their own parenting. Let there be something of a light tone in your life. Let there be fun and happiness, a sense of humor, the capacity to laugh occasionally at things that are funny.

I think of the old poem that is so meaningful in your situation:

*Mark Hopkins sat on one end of a log
And a farm boy sat on the other.
Mark Hopkins came as a pedagogue
And taught as an elder brother.
I don't care what Mark Hopkins taught,
If his Latin was small and his Greek was naught,
For the farm boy he thought, thought he,
All through the lecture time and quiz,
"The kind of a man I mean to be
Is the kind of a man Mark Hopkins is."*

(Arthur Guiterman, "Education," in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison [1948], 505.)

They want to see in you a certain kind of companionship. They want to know that you are such that they can talk with you. But remember always that you are the teacher. Let there be no undue familiarity. Let leadership take precedence over friendship.

Your students will be with you only for a short time. Will they remember you, and will they remember the things that you have taught them?

I can still recall many of my teachers in high school—James E. Moss, Arthur Welling, J. R. Smith, Owen Horsefall, Bessie Jones, to name a few. I can't remember very much of the subject matter they taught. The math, the history, the rules of English have largely been forgotten. But there is a residue, indefinable, which has remained with me all of these years and which has been added to as I have traveled the long road of life. It speaks of the beautiful in music and art, in literature, in nature. It constantly beckons me to walk the high road.

FILL YOUR LIVES WITH LOVE AND HAPPINESS

My dear friends, let your lives be filled with love—a love for God, to whom you may go for strength and comfort; a love for His dear Son, whom you can know as your Redeemer, who gave His life without selfishness of any kind to bless all mankind; love of wife or husband and family, the dearest possessions that you have; love for your students and the great opportunity to touch their lives.

Let your lives be filled with happiness. You who make of this teaching your profession may not have all the money that you might wish for and that you might have gained had you followed another occupation. But that is not where happiness is found. Happiness is found in small ways in which we touch one another's lives and interact together.

We are so deeply grateful to all of you, you who teach full-time and the very many who serve as volunteers. Look on the bright side at all times. You need not fail. You are not failing. Look about you. Look at your students. You are doing good, great good. Keep it up and rejoice in the Lord for the opportunity. Pray and walk uprightly before the Lord and He will bless you.

You have all heard my talk on the Be's—Be grateful, Be smart, Be clean, Be true, Be humble, Be prayerful. And I add for you, Be happy.

All of us have problems. We face them every day. How grateful I am that we have difficult things to wrestle with. They keep us young, if that is possible. They keep us alive. They keep us going. They keep us humble. They pull us down to our knees to ask the God of Heaven for help in solving them. Be grateful for your problems, and know that somehow there will come a solution.

DO YOUR VERY BEST

May heaven smile upon you, my dear friends in this great work. Just do the best you can, but be sure it is your very best. Then leave it in the hands of the Lord.

I have not said anything profound as I have spoken with you. Yet I have spoken of those things which are the most profound of all things in life, the great values which underlie our civilization and which make for our personal happiness, well-being, and eternal progress.

I pray that heaven will bless you, that you will find love and peace and goodness in your homes, and that you

will find happiness, a constant challenge, and the sweet rewards that come of leading and teaching and helping the young people of this great Church. May you be inspired and inspirational in the great work for which you are responsible, I humbly pray as I leave my love and blessing with you, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

CIRCLES OF EXALTATION

**ELDER SPENCER W.
KIMBALL**

**OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES**

*Excerpt from an address to
religious educators, 28 June 1968,
Brigham Young University, in
Charge to Religious
Educators, 3rd edition
(1994), 42*



I use the blackboard as I go into the stakes of Zion to dramatize some of the things that seem to me to be very, very important. To the stake presidency, high council, and bishoprics, I draw on the blackboard a series of circles, and in the top one I write “Eternal Life or Exaltation.” That is our ultimate goal for everyone, of course.

As we follow down the line—the strait and narrow way which leads to life eternal which few find—the second circle has in it “Eternal Marriage.” That is the gateway to exaltation, and the Lord says through John, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” (John 10:1.) In fact, there *is* only one door. You all know it. I hope you are indoctrinating each and every boy and girl that comes into your presence. Only one door—no other—and that is eternal marriage, for no soul will enter the portals of exaltation alone. There will be no singles. There will always be doubles, and those doubles will be a man and a woman who will love each other intensely and who will have adjusted

themselves to each other in a totaling perfection—nothing short of that!

Then I generally draw a third circle on the blackboard and ask these leaders which of all the agencies in the Church that make the most immediate and most important contribution to eternal marriage as an intermediate goal to eternal life—our final goal—will best fill this circle. It is interesting to hear their many answers. They suggest almost everything you can think of. They name all of the auxiliary organizations, and we make little circles around the big circle to indicate that each makes a contribution. They name the Primary, Sunday School, Relief Society, MIA, Scouting, priesthood meetings, sacrament meetings, conferences—everything you can imagine. Finally we settle on the one agency that brings us to what they all agree has the most important impact upon eternal marriage. That, of course, is a mission. . . .

We make another circle down this strait and narrow way that leads to life eternal. The question then arises, What would you put in the next circle? The top circle is exaltation, the second is eternal marriage, and the third is a mission. . . .

. . . What shall we put in it? Well, there is only one thing to put there, isn’t there, and that is the seminary and institute program. I never fail to give this program that important place, because I am convinced that the seminaries and institutes can do much to get young people into the mission field and into temple marriage and, finally, into exaltation. This program is that perfect agency in the Church—all the others, of course, make impressive contributions.

ETERNAL INVESTMENTS

PRESIDENT HOWARD W. HUNTER
PRESIDENT OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from An Evening with President Howard W. Hunter, 10 February 1989



LABOR FOR THE YOUTH

President Heber J. Grant once said:

“There is no labor in which any of us can be engaged that is more acceptable in the sight of our Heavenly Father than laboring for the [youth] in the Church of Jesus Christ. . . .

“. . . There is a saying that ‘as the twig is bent the tree is inclined.’ You who teach our [young people] are engaged in the labor of bending the twig. . . .

“There is no dividend that any human being can draw from bonds or stocks, or anything in the wealth of the world, that compares with the knowledge in one’s heart that he or she has been an instrument in the hands of God of shaping some life for good” (“To Those Who Teach Our Children,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1970, pp. 5–6).

You who are gathered here tonight are important agents in this great work. You labor every day in reaching out to our young people, and you do have a profound influence on them. I am sure you have already discovered the truthfulness of President Grant’s words—that no financial or worldly dividend of any kind can compare with the satisfaction you feel in shaping these young lives for good. You are making a great investment in these students and a great investment in the future strength of the Church. You will one day enjoy a great personal return on that investment—the knowledge that you assisted directly in the eternal salvation of men and women and in the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

STUDY THE SCRIPTURES . . .

I know there are difficulties in your work and not every classroom or circumstance is filled with perfection, but I have a secret for you—neither is anyone else’s circumstance or work in life perfect. Everyone faces problems in earning a living by the sweat of the brow, so if you face a few problems you can be certain you have a lot of company. Most working members of the Church work in a setting that does not have the ideal environment in which you work.

TEACH CONFIDENCE IN THE SCRIPTURES

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, and I would like you to interpret that phrase two ways.

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. That is one kind of confidence I would hope you give your students, and you can give it to them if you show them daily, hourly, that you trust in the scriptures just that way. Show them that you yourself are confident that the scriptures hold the answers to many—indeed most—of life’s problems. So when you teach, teach from the scriptures.

Obviously another meaning implied in the phrase “confidence in the scriptures” is to teach students the standard works so thoroughly that they can move through them with confidence, learning the essential scriptures and sermons and texts contained in them. 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. Give these young people sufficient experience in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price that they have both of the kinds of confidence I have just mentioned.

I have often thought that our young people in the Church would be very much like other young people outside of the Church if they do not establish some mastery and command of the standard works. All of you remember the verses the Prophet Joseph wrote from his confinement in Liberty Jail. Among them he wrote, “For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and *who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it*” (D&C 123:12; emphasis added).

We have a great responsibility as religious educators in the Church to make sure our own members, our own young people, do not fall into that unfortunate category of being blinded, of being good, fine, worthy young men and women who are kept from the truths of the scriptures because they do not know where to find those truths and because they do not possess confidence between the covers of their standard works.

INVITE TO CHRIST

Let me give a word of caution to you. 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.

Our great task is to ground these students in what can go with them through life, to point them toward him who loves them and can guide them where none of us will go. Please make sure the loyalty of these students is to the scriptures and the Lord and the doctrines of the restored Church. Point them toward God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and toward the leadership of the true Church. Make certain that when the glamour and charisma of your personality and lectures and classroom environment are gone that they are not left empty-handed to face the world. Give them the gifts that will carry them through when they have to stand alone. When you do this, the entire Church is blessed for generations to come.

THRUST IN THE SICKLE OF STUDY . . .

. . . We ought to have a Church full of women and men who know the scriptures thoroughly, who cross-reference and mark them, who develop lessons and talks from the Topical Guide, and who have mastered the maps, the Bible Dictionary, and the other helps that are contained in this wonderful set of standard works. There is obviously more there than we can master quickly. Certainly the scriptural field is “white already to harvest.” We need CES teachers who will thrust in their sickles with all their might and reap what is so plentifully offered there.

Not in this dispensation, surely not in *any* dispensation, have the scriptures—the enduring, enlightening word of God—been so readily available and so helpfully structured for the use of every man, woman, and child who will search them. The written word of God is in the most readable and accessible form ever provided to lay members in the history of the world. Surely we will be held accountable if we do not read them, and surely you

will be held accountable as professional teachers if you do not wholly invest your students in them. . . .

TEACH WITH THE SPIRIT

. . . May I also encourage you to prepare and live in such a way that you have the Spirit of the Lord in your teaching. There is so much in our world that destroys the feeling of the Spirit and so much that would keep us from having the Spirit with us. We need to do all we can for these young people who are assaulted and barraged by worldliness all around them. We need to do everything possible to let them feel the sweet, reassuring presence of the Spirit of the Lord. Your classrooms are weekday sanctuaries where they should be able to find that.

In one of the most basic revelations of this dispensation, the Lord said, “And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14).

I take this verse to mean not only that we *should* not teach without the Spirit, but also that we really *cannot* teach without it. Learning of spiritual things simply cannot take place without the instructional and confirming presence of the Spirit of the Lord. Joseph Smith would seem to agree: “All are to preach the Gospel, by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost; and no man can preach the Gospel without the Holy Ghost” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 112).

Let me offer a word of caution on this subject. I think if we are not careful as professional 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.

I have watched a great many of my brethren over the years and we have shared some rare and unspeakable spiritual experiences together. Those experiences have all been different, each special in its own way, and such sacred moments may or may not be accompanied by tears. Very often they are, but sometimes they are accompanied by total silence. Other times they are accompanied by joy. Always they are accompanied by a great manifestation of the truth, of revelation to the heart.

Give your students gospel truth powerfully taught; that is the way to give them a spiritual experience. Let it come naturally and as it will, perhaps with the shedding of

tears, but perhaps not. If what you say is the truth, and you say it purely and with honest conviction, those students will feel the spirit of the truth being taught them and will recognize that inspiration and revelation has come into their hearts. That is how we build faith. That is how we strengthen testimonies—with the power of the word of God taught in purity and with conviction.

Listen for the truth, hearken to the doctrine, and let the manifestation of the Spirit come as it may in all of its many and varied forms. Stay with solid principles; teach from a pure heart. Then the Spirit will penetrate your mind and heart and every mind and heart of your students.

REACH THE INDIVIDUAL

May I also encourage you to think about the students you teach and try to reach them on an individual level. Even though I work with large units like stakes, regions, and areas of the Church, I have to constantly remind myself that those units consist of individual people with individual problems and individual hopes and dreams. You have large classes. You have preparations to make and examinations to correct. The numbers can be staggering, but you must remember that you are teaching—and trying to reach—individual students.

I have always been impressed that the Lord deals with us personally, individually. We do many things in groups in the Church, and we need organizations of some size to allow us to administer the Church well, but so many of the important things—the *most* important things—are done individually. We bless babies one at a time, even if they are twins or triplets. We baptize and confirm children one at a time. We take the sacrament, are ordained to the priesthood, or move through the ordinances of the temple as individuals—as one person developing a relationship with our Father in Heaven. There may be others nearby us in these experiences, just as there are others in your classroom, but heaven's emphasis is on each individual, on every single person.

When Christ appeared to the Nephites, he said:

“Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet. . . .

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, *going forth one by one* until they had all gone forth, *and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands*, and did know of a surety and did bear record” (3 Nephi 11:14–15; emphasis added).

That experience took time, but it was important that each individual have the experience, that each set of eyes

and each pair of hands have that reaffirming, *personal* witness. Later Christ treated the Nephite children exactly the same way.

“He took their little children, *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (3 Nephi 17:21; emphasis added).

It will be hard for you to give all of the personal attention some of your students both want and need, but try the best you can to think of them individually, to let them feel something personal and special in the concern of you, their teacher. Pray to know which student needs what kind of help, and remain sensitive to those promptings when they then come.

Do not fall into the trap that some of us fall into by calling on the ones who are always so bright and eager and ready with the right answer. Look and probe for those who are hanging back, who are shy and retiring and perhaps troubled in spirit. If calling on such a person in class is not the best thing to do—and in some cases it may well not be—then find a reason to speak to him or her before class or after, in the hallway or, better yet, in your office. Remember that the very best teaching is one on one and often takes place out of the classroom.

Demands on your time are great. You will not be able to do as much of this as you would like, but think about it. Keep it in the forefront of your mind. Watch for the opportunity to eventually touch everyone personally during the course of your term. You should not be calculating about it, as though your students were on a laundry list requiring a check off, but you can be somewhat systematic in remembering who you give assignments to, who you ask to pray or respond, and how you can effectively reach each student individually.

In your search for individually teaching each student, you will most certainly discover that some are not doing as well as others and that some are not making it to class at all. Take personal interest in such students; give extra-mile effort to invite and help the lost sheep back into the fold. “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). An incalculable price has been paid by our Savior for every one of us, and it is incumbent on us to do all we can to assist him in his work. It is incumbent on us to make sure that the gift of the Atonement is extended to every young man or woman we have responsibility for. In your situation, that means keeping them in full activity in your classes.

Give special attention to those who may be struggling, and go out as necessary to find the lost sheep. A written postcard, a telephone call, or, if possible, a personal visit to a home in many cases will have a wonderful result. Personal attention to a young person just beginning to stray may save hours and hours—indeed,

years and years—of effort later in our attempt to reclaim that person to activity. Do all you can to fortify the strong ones and reanchor the wayward ones at this age. It will be infinitely more difficult to successfully reach them later.

“LIVE AS YOU TEACH”

Let me conclude this portion of counsel with an admonition to represent in your own life what you are trying to teach others to be in theirs. President Ezra Taft Benson said to this very group more than a decade ago:

“Your responsibility is to live as you teach. Be consistent in your life with the message you declare to your students. The majority of you have provided strong, commendable examples of what a Latter-day Saint life and home should be. How many students have been induced into righteous

decisions because of the examples of their seminary and institute teachers! . . .

“. . . As teachers you need constantly to ask, ‘How would the Savior have me appear before others? How would He have me act?’ . . .

“You have been counseled repeatedly to ‘live in the world, but not be one of the world.’ . . . Live by the covenants you took in the temple” (“The Gospel Teacher and His Message” [address to religious educators, 17 Sept. 1976], pp. 12, 14–15; see also *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. [1982], pp. 52–53).

Our young people need great living examples, moral and religious heroes, if you will, who set a standard before them and show them the grace and beauty of a worthy life.

MEN OF EXAMPLE

PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

Excerpt from an address to religious educators, 12 September 1975, 1–7, 10–11; see also Charge to Religious Educators, 3rd edition (1994), 23–27

I should like to speak to you specifically relative to your challenge and your charge as teachers of youth. . . .

. . . Some of you have been laboring long enough to remember nearly a decade ago when I addressed the seminary and institute faculty at their summer school on the BYU campus. At that time I directed my remarks to the topic “What I Hope You Will Teach My Grandchildren.” At the time I had twenty-seven grandchildren. I calculated that for the next twenty-four years there would be up to twelve of these precious children under your training every year, and that collectively they might spend up to 152 years in your classrooms and under your tutelage. I also mentioned that I expected at least thirty years of missionary service from them. I was concerned then about the men who would be employed during the next quarter century. I wanted them to be men of valor and faith, of forcefulness and courage—men of example.

I requested then that these grandchildren be taught honesty, loyalty, humility, and a sense of responsibility. I expressed the desire that they be taught to avoid



fanaticism and fads. I asked those teachers to assist these youngsters in putting on the whole armor of God by teaching them to know, to love, and to use the scriptures. I asked that these students be heavily involved in scripture reading. There are blessings that come from immersing ourselves in the scriptures. The distance narrows between ourselves and our Father in heaven. Our spirituality shines brighter. We love more intensely those whom we should love. It is much easier to follow counsel. The lessons of life are learned more readily and surely.

To know the patriarchs and prophets of the ages past and their faithfulness under stress and temptation and persecution strengthens the resolves of youth. All through the scriptures almost every weakness and every strength of man has been portrayed, and rewards and punishments have been recorded. One would surely be blind who could not learn to live life properly by such reading. The Lord said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” (John 5:39.) He was the same Lord and Master in whose life we find every quality of goodness, every quality we should develop in our own lives.

I hoped these 152 years—and a possible eventual millennium for my posterity—of training that would supplement their parents’ training would bring out a beautiful normalcy in the lives of my posterity and of all others—a well-balanced approach to living. Knowing the tendency for most young people to be hero-worshippers, I hoped you, as their teachers, would qualify for that admiration that is almost adoration. I wanted them to have beautiful, abundant lives patterned after the ideal image of an eternal family. This they would learn, a little from what

you would tell them, but far more from what you would show them. Consequently, I hoped the picture which was impressed during these fifteen decades of learning would be near the ideal. This would lead me to expect honor, integrity, cleanliness, positiveness, and faith in our instructors of religion. I expected the teachers to appear before these young people as well-dressed, well-groomed, positive, happy people from homes where peace and love have left a warm, vibrant influence as their day with them began. I wanted them to feel sure that their teacher that very morning had walked out of a loving home where peace reigned and love was enthroned. This is still part of the challenge facing you marvelous men and women who labor in our weekday religious education program.

Indeed, the mission of all religious educators in the Church Educational System is to assist parents in rearing their children to be righteous Latter-day Saints, willing and capable to serve effectively in the kingdom of God. This is your part. To do your part well, it is wise to remember with Oliver Wendell Holmes that “to reach a port, we must sail, sometimes with the wind, and sometimes against it; but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor.” You need to heed this admonition to take charge of your lives.

I now have twenty-seven grandchildren and sixteen great-grandchildren, with the likelihood of hundreds more posterity. With the growth of my family and the growth of other families as well, your scope of influence and range of contact have been greatly magnified. Our seminary and institute program is now reaching out to assist parents in over fifty countries. That is a great blessing, a great opportunity, and a great responsibility, for we know by revelation that the home, with a close-knit family, is where society is saved. Home life and parental guidance are the remedy for all ailments, the cure for all diseases, the solution for all problems.

In this connection, one of the most provocative and profound statements in holy writ is Paul’s instruction to husbands and wives concerning their duty to each other and to their families. First he commands the women:

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:22.)

“As unto the Lord.” “As unto the Lord, subject yourselves unto your own husbands,” he says. “As unto the Lord.” Can you conceive that? Does that mean something to you as you listen to the Lord’s counsel, do his will, follow his righteous precepts, serve him faithfully?

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. . . .” (Ephesians 5:23.)

Can you find in all the holy scriptures where the Lord Jesus Christ ever failed his church? Can you find any scripture that says he was untrue to his people, to his

neighbors, friends, or associates? Was he faithful? Was he true? Is there anything good and worthy that he did not give? Then that is what we ask—what he asks of a husband, every husband. That is the goal. Can you think of a single exception in his great life? There should be none in yours.

“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” (Ephesians 5:24.)

Many misconceptions, many errors, are creeping into the thoughts of great numbers of people in our day. We hope that you sisters will lead the way, lead the procession of women who understand the great opportunities that may come to them, the great responsibilities. For opportunity and responsibility go hand in hand. This is no idle jest, no facetious matter. Much is said in Paul’s words “as unto the Lord.” Let it sink deep into your hearts. A woman need have no fear of being imposed upon or being subject to any dictatorial measures or improper demands when her husband is thoughtful, self-sacrificing, and worthy. One would think that no intelligent woman would hesitate to submit herself to her own truly righteous husband in everything, but sometimes we are shocked to see the wife take over the leadership, naming the one to pray, the place to be, the things to do.

Husbands are commanded:

“Love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” (Ephesians 5:25.)

There is a scripture which says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13.) Your wife is your friend. You should be willing to go even to the extent of giving your life for her if the need should appear. Would you give your life for her?

You need to ask yourself, “Can I love my wife even as Christ also has loved the Church?” Can you think of how he loved the church? Its every breath was important to him. Its every growth, its every individual, was precious to him. He gave to those people all his energy, all his power, all his interest. He gave his life—and what more could one give? He gave his life voluntarily. He said, “I don’t have to.”

To Peter he said, “I could call twelve legions of angels; you don’t need to pull out your sword. You couldn’t defend me anyway. But I could call twelve legions of angels, and they’d protect me. But I’m going to give my life. I give it for my people.” [See Matthew 26:52–54.] He gave that precious life—the most precious life ever lived upon this earth.

When the husband is ready to treat his household in that manner, not only his wife but also his children will

respond to his loving and exemplary leadership. It will be automatic. He won't need to demand it; it will come because they will want to do what they understand to be necessary and right.

Certainly if fathers are to be respected, they must merit respect. If they are to be loved, they must be consistent, lovable, understanding, and kind—and they must honor their priesthood. They must see themselves as fortunate trustees of precious spirit-children whom God has entrusted to their care.

What a great incentive a mother has to honor and build up her worthy husband in the esteem of the offspring when she knows that this contributes to the well-adjusted lives of her children. And what a great incentive the father has for rising to his tallest spiritual stature to merit the love and respect of all members of the family.

And so we plead with you fathers to return to your little kingdoms and, with kindness, justice, proper discipline, and love, to inspire your family. We appeal to mothers to help create that happy family relationship. We desire that our people strengthen their families according to the pattern set by Abraham. We need to prepare all within our homes to serve beyond our homes as calls and opportunities come to provide leaven for the world. The world wants and needs what we have. In the beautiful prayer by Brother Holland, he mentioned the famine in the world—famine not of bread, not of the ordinary needs, but a famine for the word of the Lord; and you are the custodians of the bread of life, you take it to your families so that they can share it with the people of the world.

We are constantly exerting ourselves to impress upon the parents in the Church that it is their primary responsibility to rear their children in faith and teach them correct principles of living. But we must be realistic, for many parents fail in varying degrees to train their children properly. Therefore, all other agencies dedicated to doing good must carefully pick up the fallen torch. Among the most effective torch-bearers in the Church are those who teach in the seminaries and institutes and others who teach religion at our Church university and colleges. For many youngsters, you teachers and your lovely wives constitute one of the best models of proper home living. I hope that each of you is striving to be the perfect husband and father, with proper control of self and with loving family relationships, so that your students see in you and your family the ideal after which to pattern their lives.

“As Maine goes, so goes the nation,” we hear in political circles. As you go, so they go—the children, the youth of Zion. I want our youth to choose well their companions when they make their friends, and even more when they begin their courting, partly because they see in their loved

teacher or director all the qualities making up the ideal. They should see an intelligent and well-adjusted wife and mother fully supporting her husband and doing her part to build the near perfect husband-wife relationship. I hope that these youth will see their instructors contributing wisely to community life as dignified, happy citizens and to Church life as devout, dependable, and effective leaders. I hope they love you, for those whom we love, we serve. “How do I find the right wife?” I am frequently asked in groups of missionaries who are beginning to think in that direction. My answer always is, “Find one like my wife, and then you will be all right.” I hope you feel that way, too, about your wife.

I would hope the young people's confidence in you will rise to such levels that they will not hesitate to take their perplexities to you. Even though as weekday religion teachers and professors, you have no ecclesiastical authority and you are not common judges, you may be the first line of approach. Your wise counsel could help them solve some of their problems, and you will, of course, refer them to their bishops for those solutions which lie in the bishop's domain.

I hope that you will be such a solid rock that they can receive from you strength that can be a real deterrent to troubles. Preventive medicine is better than rehabilitative medicine, though we need both. I hope that you will be able to fortify them against sin. Sin is still sin, and it is in the world in increasing proportions. Your principal function, perhaps, is to bolster their defenses against it. The bishop is the one to assist them in the remedial process should they falter and slip from their solid moorings.

Friction and quarreling must be avoided in your homes. It must be avoided lest you carry that infectious venom into the classroom. Your students do not deserve to suffer by reason of your problems. Of course, you will do all you teach your students to do: to fast, to bear testimony, to pay tithing, to attend all proper meetings, to attend temple sessions in due time, to keep the Sabbath holy, to give Church service ungrudgingly, to have home evenings and family prayers, and to keep solvent, and be honest and full of integrity. And I underscore the words, *solvent*, *honest* and *full of integrity*. They are very meaningful. Example is better than precept without personal performance, which is like “sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.”

Your students are entitled to expect years of firm spirituality in your effective teaching. The more experienced you become, the better should be your instruction. Keep yourselves in tune spiritually so that your intellects will remain resilient and receptive to the truth.

I have said before that our youth should never be taught by mercenaries. None of you should be teaching in this program merely as an occupation. If you are, perhaps there are other places where you could do as well financially. But if your salary is incidental and your “grand and magnificent obsession” is our children and their growth and development, then I would be glad to have you all teaching in New York or Michigan or Wisconsin or Utah or California or in other places where my posterity and your posterity will be found. . . .

The coming generation must also be nurtured in their faith in Jesus Christ to the point that it will empower them to rise above the selfishness of society. Selfishness strikes a deadly blow at the root of true character. Failure in the eternal sense of the word is almost always associated with selfishness. If the youth of the Church are to fulfill their mission properly, they must be taught to overcome selfishness. That the parents can do, and you can assist them with it. Understanding the work and mission of our Lord as taught in the scriptures helps us develop the desire to serve unselfishly.

This, then, is our program. This is your program. You have accepted the responsibility, and you will be judged by the way you carry out this great responsibility: to reaffirm and carry forward boldly the work of God in cleanliness and uprightness, to take the gospel of truth to the world—to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In order to do this, we need strong youth and strong families.

As religious educators, you stand in a key position to do much to assist in this great work. We appreciate all that you have done and are now doing. We call upon you, as we are calling others in other roles, to do even more. Prepare yourselves to do even more and to do it better. Make quality performance a goal. Seek the Spirit of the Lord. Study the scriptures. Work in unity. Stay close to the fundamentals so that what you teach will be true. Strengthen your lessons by making them simple. Love your students and lead them with the light of your own testimonies. Be humble and live the gospel in your own homes and your own lives so that those whom you teach will do likewise.

I bear witness to you, my brothers and sisters, that this is the work of the Lord. We are not wasting our time doing this work. This is the Lord’s program. The youth of Zion need you. They are begging for you, and you must supply for them the strength that can come from you. Help them build their testimonies. You are not so much interested in the secular; you are most interested in the spiritual. See that they have the material and the opportunities to develop their testimonies, for testimony is the essence of spiritual life. May God bless you as you go back to your groups and bring to them an awareness of the work of the Lord. The Lord is revealing. He is carrying forward his work. He is inspiring the Brethren as they teach the true gospel. May that also be your happy lot, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE GOSPEL TEACHER AND HIS MESSAGE

**PRESIDENT EZRA TAFT
BENSON**

**PRESIDENT OF THE
QUORUM OF THE TWELVE
APOSTLES**

*Excerpt from an address to
religious educators, 17 September
1976, 1–8, 12–16*

This evening I desire to speak to the subject “The Gospel Teacher and His Message.” In doing so, I speak not only to the teacher who spends time in the classroom, but I speak also to your partners, for you are a teaching team. Unless you and your mate are united in purpose, dedication, and loyalty, you will not succeed to the extent you otherwise could. . . .



PREPARE YOURSELF SPIRITUALLY

Your first responsibility as a teacher of the gospel is to prepare yourself spiritually. All of you were interviewed by a General Authority when you applied for employment in the Church Educational System. I assume most of you were asked if you possessed a testimony—that personal witness—of Joseph Smith’s calling and of the divinity of Jesus Christ. In the late President J. Reuben Clark’s words, this is “the first requisite of a teacher for teaching [the gospel]. . . . No teacher who does not have a real testimony . . . of the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus, and of the divine mission of Joseph Smith—including in all its reality the First Vision—has any place in the Church school system.” (“The Charted Course of the Church in Education,” Address to Seminary and Institute personnel, Aspen Grove, 8 Aug. 1938, p. 7.) We assume that every one of you, without any equivocation, has such a testimony; otherwise, you are flying under false colors and your teaching is a sham—a pretense.

“The mere possession of a testimony,” declared President Clark, “is not enough. You must have besides this . . . moral courage. For in the absence of moral courage to declare your testimony, it will reach the students only after such dilution as will make it difficult if not impossible for them to detect it. . . .” (Ibid.)

This much we assume you do in the performance of your mission; however, this represents only a basic requirement. Beyond this—to paraphrase the Master Teacher—we would say to you, “Teacher, heal thyself!” or, as He said on another occasion to his chief apostle, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” (Luke 22:32.) Conversion to Jesus Christ and his gospel is more than testimony; it is to be healed spiritually. In Paul’s words, it is to partake of “the power of God.” A most commendable example of this process is found in the Book of Mormon in the story of Enos. You are all too familiar with the story for me to repeat the background. I only want to draw your attention to these verses. Enos testified: “I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, *before I received a remission of my sins.*” (Enos 2. Italics added.)

He thereupon clarified to us of what that wrestle with God consisted. Note the fervor in his petition: “My soul hungered . . . I kneeled down before my Maker . . . I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication *for mine own soul* . . . all the day long did I cry unto him. . . .” (Enos 4. Italics added.)

Then Enos testified: “There came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. . . . wherefore, my guilt was swept away.” (Enos 5, 6.) . . .

This is the manner by which the saints in all ages have come to be converted, or in the words of the Book of Mormon, “changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures. . . .” (Mosiah 27:25, 26.) This is what is meant by partaking of the “power of God.” You teachers—you who are to teach the power of this gospel—I would ask you, “have [you] spiritually been born of God? Have [you] received his image in your countenances? Have [you] experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Alma 5:14.)

A measure of this change of heart is what happens to the motives and desires of the gospel teacher. Enos testified that he “began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren.” (Enos 9.) Alma, who also experienced this mighty change, said: “I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste. . . .” (Alma 36:24.)

May your motives be likewise as pure. May the welfare of your students be the *primary* motive to your teaching. May you be converted so you can strengthen your students.

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. To study by faith is to seek understanding and the Spirit of the Lord through the prayer of faith. Then you will have the power to convince your students. This is not just good advice; it is a commandment of the Lord. Hear His words: . . .

“Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.” (D&C 11:21. Italics added.)

The sequence to possessing the power of God in your teaching is to seek first to obtain the word; then comes understanding and the Spirit, and finally the power to convince. Yes, as our living prophet has instructed you, “There are blessings that come from immersing ourselves in the scriptures. The distance narrows between ourselves and our Father in heaven. Our spirituality shines brighter.” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Men of Example,” Address to religious educators at the Assembly Hall, 12 Sept. 1975, p. 2.)

Always remember, there is no satisfactory substitute for the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. These should be your original sources. Read and ponder more what the Lord has said, and less about what others have written concerning what the Lord said.

I would hope that each morning before you leave your homes you kneel before the Lord in secret as well as family prayer. I also hope that before you go into the classroom you ask to be led by the Spirit. The most important part of your teaching preparation is that you are guided by the Spirit.

TEACH ONLY THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

A second responsibility I name is that you teach only the gospel of Jesus Christ. This too is a commandment of the Lord, for He has said: “The . . . 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. Italics added.) . . .

In 1938 President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., speaking for the First Presidency, pronounced a charge to you in an address entitled “The Charted Course of the Church in Education.” All of you should have a copy of this address and read it at least at the beginning of each teaching year. I quote this statement from his address:

“. . . Your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . 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 . . . to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you. . . .

“You are not . . . 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. . . .

“You are not to teach the philosophies of the world. . . . Your sole field is the Gospel. . . .” (Clark, “Charted Course,” p. 9. Italics added.)

This counsel has not changed over the years. Its applicability is even greater today, for the religious education program has expanded and numbers of teachers have increased. More recently, President Harold B. Lee renewed this charge in these words: “You’re to teach the old doctrines, not so plain that they can just understand, *but you must teach the doctrines of the Church so plainly that no one can misunderstand.*” (“Loyalty,” Address to Seminary and Institute personnel, 8 July 1966, p. 9. Italics added.) As you stay with the fundamental doctrines and gospel principles, adhering to the standard works, the words of the Brethren, and your Church Educational System outlined courses of study, seeking the guidance of the Spirit, you should have no trouble following this counsel. . . .

LIVE AS YOU TEACH

Third, and finally, your responsibility is to live as you teach. Be consistent in your life with the message you declare to your students. The majority of you have provided strong, commendable examples of what a Latter-day Saint life and home should be. How many students have been induced into righteous decisions because of the examples of their seminary and institute teachers! “I want to be just like them” is an often-heard expression referring to you as a husband and wife team. We think those expressions are well deserved and we commend you for the examples you set.

We are pleased that in addition to your teaching, so many of you are holding responsible positions in the Church. We commend you for this, for you have an obligation to do more in the Church than your vocation requires. The mission of the Church has never changed. It is that all members “seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.” (D&C 6:6.) As you seek to do this in your professional and service callings, you will have more of the Spirit to be with you.

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.

Last Friday, with our children, we celebrated the first fifty years of our eternal companionship. I know what it is to enjoy the priceless blessings of sweet companionship, bolstered by daily love, devotion, loyalty, and unity, without a murmur from her lips. Yes, I know what it is as the eldest of eleven children to be reared in a home where I never heard a cross word between father and mother.

I was impressed by Elder Theodore Tuttle’s tribute to Elder Boyd K. Packer and his wife in the foreword to Elder Packer’s excellent book, *Teach Ye Diligently*. Speaking of Elder Packer’s wife, Elder Tuttle wrote:

“She it is who is his sweetheart, his friend, and his quiet support. Because of her he can say, with complete honesty, I know there are families where parents can live together in love *without a single argument for thirty years and more.*” (Foreword, p. ix. Italics added.)

Though Elder Packer is now one of the Twelve, he was once a seminary teacher; then he was an administrator in the Church Educational System. He and his wife lived that example then as they do now.

Your home example may be a more powerful influence than you realize. Years ago, while in Washington, D.C., a prominent constitutional lawyer, John D. Miller, spent an evening in our home. After an hour of visiting in the living room, Sister Benson and our daughters, who had been preparing the dinner, announced that it was ready. We went into the dining room, and the children started preparing chairs for family prayer. And so I said to Judge Miller, “Judge, it’s customary in our home to have family prayer, daily devotion, morning and evening. Would you care to join us?” He said, “Yes, I would.” He watched the children to see what they did, and then he knelt at his chair. We called on our oldest daughter, who was then probably eight or nine years of age, to lead the prayer. She is now the mother of five children, wife of a stake president. Barbara offered a sweet, lovely prayer, much as your daughters would do, and then she added, “And Heavenly Father, bless Judge Miller that he will enjoy his visit with us and return safely to his hotel.” That was all.

We drove the judge down to his hotel. Nothing was said of the incident. About six months later this man was host to some twenty-five or thirty industrial, business, labor, and agricultural leaders at his winter home in Florida. After the dinner, they were seated in a large living room talking about problems facing the nation, and as is often the case (more often I think than we

realize), the subject turned to things of the Spirit—to religion. And then John D. Miller, this fine Christian gentleman, not a member of the Church, told of this little incident that had happened in our home—this simple thing of family prayer. And he said, “Gentlemen, I went to my hotel that night feeling that I had not fully measured up as a father. We had never had devotion in our home with my children.” And then he went on to tell of the power he felt there must be in the lives of children reared in a home where there is spirituality.

Let your homes radiate what you are, and that quiet influence will have a lasting impression on all who know you.

Now, let me speak to you on several other matters that relate to your example before the young people.

You, as a couple, represent the First Presidency in all you do and in the way you appear. We expect that you will be conservative and well groomed. The expression “follow the Brethren” has a broader meaning than some would apply to it. It means not only to agree with the counsel given to the Church by the Brethren, but also to follow their example in appearance and deportment. As teachers you need constantly to ask, “How would the Savior have me appear before others? How would He have me act?” You should not imitate worldly fashions in your dress or so-called “mod” expressions in your language. Your hair style should be in conformity with the standards of the Church. You are on the front line, so to speak, in impressing our young men to serve missions. Certainly you should provide them with an example of what we are asking future missionaries to conform to.

Because of your example and influence upon young people, they will come to you from time to time for counsel on personal problems. May I urge you to develop a close relationship with their ecclesiastical leaders, so that when they do come to you, you can guide them to their bishops. This permits the problems to be handled in the Lord’s way. Never must you get between the student and his own bishop.

Next I mention your responsibility for financial solvency. You should do everything you can to get out of debt and to stay solvent. I realize you need credit to buy your homes or possibly to advance your education, and sometimes you need credit to obtain transportation; but outside of these things, you should pay as you go. You will not be able to purchase at once all the things you desire. Learn to postpone until you can pay cash. There should never be any question concerning the honesty and integrity of any of our teachers. Pay your debts on time. There is no excuse for any teacher in this program to have a bad reputation because he does not pay his debts.

Each of you should pay an honest tithe. That is a condition of your employment. You should give an honest day’s work for your pay. This means that you are on the job during the normal working hours, even though you are not teaching classes during some of those hours.

You have been counseled repeatedly to “live in the world, but not be one of the world.” Sometimes some of our members want to live as close as they can to worldly standards and yet qualify for a temple recommend. Live by the covenants you took in the temple; do not live on the fringes. You will be judged by the kinds of movies you attend, by the way you dress, and by the music to which you listen. Some years ago one of our teachers told his students that he used cola drinks and that it did not prevent him from holding a temple recommend. This was an indication of poor judgment on his part, and it illustrates what I mean by living “on the fringes.” Live the spirit of the commandments.

President Harold B. Lee made memorable this expression: “If you want to lift another soul, you yourself must be standing on higher ground.” That “higher ground” is your persuasive example in keeping the commandments. So, to repeat President Kimball’s counsel to you:

“You will do all you teach your charges to do—in fact, to bear testimony, to pay your tithing, to attend all proper meetings, to attend temple sessions, to keep the Sabbath holy; to give Church service ungrudgingly, to have home evenings, and family prayers; to keep solvent, always honest and full of integrity.” (“Men of Example,” p. 8.)

“What manner of men ought ye to be?” asked the Savior. And His answer to us: “Verily I say unto you, *even as I am!*” (3 Nephi 27:27. Italics added.)

Now, tonight I’ve spoken directly to you. What I’ve said to you is to help you stay on course and render your message more effectively. As I stated in the beginning, we are much pleased with your service, your dedication, your loyalty and your efforts to inspire the youth of Zion with testimonies of the gospel. So I summarize: Prepare yourself spiritually; teach only the gospel of Jesus Christ; and live as you teach.

In Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, he saw a man dressed in a white robe who beckoned him to follow him through the dark and dreary waste, which represented the temptations of the world. With the help of prayer, Lehi was led to partake of the fruit of that tree, which provided him “with exceedingly great joy.” (See 1 Nephi 8:6–12.) We would hope that you teachers would be as men in white robes, leading our youth safely through the temptations of the world so that they too may partake of the tree of life and have exceeding great joy.

EQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER
OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from an address delivered at regional representatives' seminar, 3 April 1975, 1

Several years ago with Bill and Allie Marriott, Donna and I went to a country fair in New Hampshire. It was a beautiful fall day and a delightful old-time country fair.



The center of attraction was the oxen pulling contest. Several teams of oxen with heavy wooden yokes were lined up to compete. A wooden sledge was weighted with cement blocks: ten thousand pounds—five tons—to begin with. The object was for the oxen to move the sledge three feet.

I noticed a well-matched pair of very large, brindled, blue-gray animals. They were the big-boned, Holstein, Durham-cross, familiar big blue oxen of seasons past. Because of their size, of course they were the favorites.

Each team was given three attempts to move the sledge. If they were able to do so easily, more weight was added until the teams were eliminated one by one. In turn, each team was hitched to the sledge. The teamster would position his animals carefully, pat them, chortle to them, whisper to them, and then at a goad and a loud command they would slam forward against the yoke. Either the weight would move or the oxen were jerked to a halt.

The big blue oxen didn't even place! A small, nondescript pair of animals, not very well matched for size, moved the sledge all three times.

I was amazed and fascinated and turned to an old New Englander in the crowd and asked if he could explain how that could happen. He said, "E-yeh." (That means yes in New England.) And then he explained. The big blues were larger and stronger and better matched for size than the other team. But the little oxen had better teamwork and coordination. They hit the yoke together. Both animals jerked forward at exactly the same time and the force moved the load.

One of the big blue oxen had lagged a second or pushed a second too soon—something like a football player being off side—and the force was spent in a glancing blow. The yoke then was twisted and the team jerked to one side and the sledge hardly moved.

If I were to moralize, I would begin in typical Book of Mormon language, "And thus we see" that size and strength are not enough. It takes teamwork as well.

All that I have to say in my appointed time here about education can be demonstrated by the foregoing illustration of teamwork by those two oxen. In the Church we must have teamwork in education—not the kind of teamwork where two teams compete in an adversary relationship such as we see in athletics, but teamwork like oxen yoked together, side by side, pulling together.

In education we have two sides. On one side we have the professional, employed, and salaried teachers directed by supervisors and administrators. On the other hand we have the called, ordained, presided-over priesthood officers. They are to work side by side in the ward and in the stake and on a regional level. At the top both are presided over by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve, which are represented by the Church Board of Education.

AS YOU COUNSEL YOUNG PEOPLE

ELDER THOMAS S. MONSON
OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from Pathways to Perfection: Discourses of Thomas S. Monson (1973), 92–93

As you counsel young people, you must be in the frame of mind to be receptive to the Spirit of the Lord if you are to help them in their decision making. There are no small decisions in the life of a young person. Remember that the power to lead is also the power to mislead; and the power



to mislead is the power to destroy. You have the power to destroy the souls of the young men and women under your charge. Conversely, you have the power to lift them closer to God as you live righteously and as your teaching reflects that righteous life.

I bear testimony to you today that as you *listen attentively*, as you *evaluate carefully*, as you *counsel wisely*, as you *pray fervently*, as you *live righteously*, you will be the counselor our Heavenly Father would have bless the lives of his precious youth. Provide that word of encouragement, that interview with the bishop, that example to follow which will bring young people upward and onward toward the celestial kingdom of God. You are indeed shepherds watching over Israel, and you must not be found sleeping when your services are needed.

THE SPIRIT MUST BE OUR CONSTANT COMPANION

ELDER HENRY B. EYRING OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

*Remarks at An Evening with
President Gordon B. Hinckley,
7 February 2003*

Brothers and sisters, I appreciate and admire your great service. Many of you are making extraordinary sacrifices. You are doing a wonderful work in the lives of our young people, and yet we must do more.

Too many of our students become spiritual casualties. Many go into the mission field and to the temple worthily. Yet your heart and mine aches when we think of a name and see a face of someone we taught and loved and then learned failed in the mission field or in a temple marriage.

One such tragedy is one too many. And yet the troubles and the temptations our students faced just five years ago pale in comparison with what we see now, and even more difficult times are ahead. I have felt as many of you have felt that what we have done and are doing will not be enough. We need greater power to get the gospel down into the hearts and lives of our students.

God is always ready with the help we need. He may use many means to give us the multiplication of power to teach that we must have. I do not know yet all of what He will have us do. One thing He *will* require of us will not be new—it will be to do better what He has always required.

The best summary of what we must do is described in a familiar scripture repeated often. It's in section 42 of the Doctrine and Covenants: "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:14).

You can see why knowing how to get the Spirit matters so much for us. What will keep our students pure and at peace in the world they face is more than knowing the gospel and the word of God. It is more than knowing the



wonderful organization, the inspiring history, and the great leaders of the Church. They must choose obedience to the Lord's commandments in the face of greater temptations and trials. They must do it out of faith in Jesus Christ. And that faith can only come through the witness of the Spirit.

You must have the Spirit as your constant companion to teach with power, and your students will not survive spiritually without the Spirit as their companion. We and they will qualify for the power we require in the same way. It takes prayer offered in faith and it takes obedience to the commandments of God. For some of us it may take more prayer, but for all of us it will take more faith. We need to have unshaken confidence that the Spirit will come to attend us. So do our students. We need to pray with confidence that the Spirit will guide us in our teaching and in our lives. Part of that faith is our determination, as we plead for the Spirit, that we will obey its directions.

Once the Lord knows our faith is sufficient that He can be certain we will obey, He will send the Spirit to teach us more clearly and more frequently. The prayer of faith always includes a commitment to obey. Our obedience, in time, will bring, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the change in our natures that we need to find peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. He wants that for us and for our students.

So, you can be sure that an increased influence of the Spirit will come. You can expect it in the days and months ahead. Your prayers will rise a little higher, your determination to obey will increase, and you will find that the Spirit is teaching you the peaceable things in less peaceful times. And you will see evidence that the Atonement is changing the hearts of those you teach. Their greater strength and happiness will bring you joy.

I know that God the Father lives. His Beloved Son is our Savior. Joseph Smith was a prophet, and President Gordon B. Hinckley is the living prophet of God. We are so grateful that he is with us today. The Spirit will attend you as you listen to him now with a prayer of faith in your hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

THE CANDLE OF THE LORD

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

*Excerpt from Ensign, January
1983, 51–56*

*From a talk given at a seminar for new
mission presidents, 25 June 1982*



I have chosen, after much thought, to speak as though your missionaries, your elders and sisters, were here in your place, and to present thoughts more fitted to them, the beginners, the inexperienced, than to you. I hope that through you, I may share with them some things I have learned about the Spirit and how we may prepare ourselves to receive it.

We do not learn spiritual things in exactly the same way we learn other things that we know, even though such things as reading, listening, and pondering may be used. I have learned that it requires a special attitude both to teach and to learn spiritual things. There are some things you know, or may come to know, that you will find quite difficult to explain to others. I am very certain that it was meant to be that way. . . .

NOT IN WORDS ALONE

We cannot express spiritual knowledge in words alone. We can, however, with words show another how to prepare for the reception of the Spirit. The Spirit itself will help. “For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.” (2 Ne. 33:1.)

Then when we have a spiritual communication, we can say within ourselves, this is it! This is what is meant by those words in the revelation. Thereafter, if they are carefully chosen, words are adequate for teaching about spiritual things.

We do not have the words (even the scriptures do not have words) which perfectly describe the Spirit. The scriptures generally use the word voice, which does not exactly fit. These delicate, refined spiritual communications are not seen with our eyes, nor heard with our ears. And even though it is described as a voice, it is a voice that one feels, more than one hears.

Once I came to understand this, one verse in the Book of Mormon took on a profound meaning, and my testimony of the book increased immeasurably. It had to do with Laman and Lemuel, who rebelled against Nephi. Nephi rebuked them and said, “Ye have seen an angel, and he

spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words.” (1 Ne. 17:45; italics added). . . .

THE STILL, SMALL VOICE

The voice of the Spirit is described in the scripture as being neither “loud” nor “harsh.” It is “not a voice of thunder, neither . . . voice of a great tumultuous noise.” But rather, “a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper,” and it can “pierce even to the very soul” and “cause [the heart] to burn.” (3 Ne. 11:3; Hel. 5:30; D&C 85:6–7.) Remember, Elijah found the voice of the Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but was a “still small voice.” (1 Kgs. 19:12.)

The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all. (No wonder that the Word of Wisdom was revealed to us, for how could the drunkard or the addict feel such a voice?)

Occasionally it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening and say in our manner and expression, like Samuel of ancient times, “Speak [Lord], for thy servant heareth.” (1 Sam. 3:10.)

STRONG SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES DO NOT COME FREQUENTLY

I have learned that strong, impressive spiritual experiences do not come to us very frequently. And when they do, they are generally for our own edification, instruction, or correction. Unless we are called by proper authority to do so, they do not position us to counsel or to correct others.

DON'T TALK LIGHTLY OF EXPERIENCES

I have come to believe also that it is not wise to continually talk of unusual spiritual experiences. They are to be guarded with care and shared only when the Spirit itself prompts you to use them to the blessing of others. I am ever mindful of Alma's words:

“It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.” (Alma 12:9.)

I heard President Marion G. Romney once counsel mission presidents and their wives in Geneva, “I do not tell all I know; I have never told my wife all I know, for I found out that if I talked too lightly of sacred things, thereafter the Lord would not trust me.”

We are, I believe, to keep these things and ponder them in our hearts, as Luke said Mary did of the supernal events that surrounded the birth of Jesus. (See Luke 2:19.)

YOU CANNOT FORCE SPIRITUAL THINGS

There is something else to learn. A testimony is not thrust upon you; a testimony grows. We become taller in testimony like we grow taller in physical stature; we hardly know it happens because it comes by growth.

It is not wise to wrestle with the revelations with such insistence as to demand immediate answers or blessings to your liking. You cannot force spiritual things. Such words as compel, coerce, constrain, pressure, demand, do not describe our privileges with the Spirit. You can no more force the Spirit to respond than you can force a bean to sprout, or an egg to hatch before it’s time. You can create a climate to foster growth, nourish, and protect; but you cannot force or compel: you must await the growth.

Do not be impatient to gain great spiritual knowledge. Let it grow, help it grow, but do not force it or you will open the way to be misled.

USE ALL YOUR RESOURCES

We are expected to use the light and knowledge we already possess to work out our lives. We should not need a revelation to instruct us to be up and about our duty, for we have been told to do that already in the scriptures; nor should we expect revelation to replace the spiritual or temporal intelligence which we have already received—only to extend it. We must go about our life in an ordinary, workaday way, following the routines and rules and regulations that govern life.

Rules and regulations and commandments are valuable protection. Should we stand in need of revealed instruction to alter our course, it will be waiting along the way as we arrive at the point of need. The counsel to be “anxiously engaged” is wise counsel indeed. (See D&C 58:27.)

MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU KNOW

Now, do not feel hesitant or ashamed if you do not know everything. Nephi said, “I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.” (1 Ne. 11:17.)

There may be more power in your testimony than even you realize. . . .

WHERE TO START

It is not unusual to have a missionary say, “How can I bear testimony until I get one? How can I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is true? If I do not have such a testimony, would that not be dishonest?”

Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be *found* in the *bearing* of it! Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that “leap of faith,” as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two. “The spirit of man,” as the scripture says, indeed “is the candle of the Lord.” (Prov. 20:27.)

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. Can you not see that it will be supplied as you share it? As you give that which you have, there is a replacement, with increase! . . .

HE WILL SUSTAIN YOU

If you will speak with humility and honest intent, the Lord will not leave you alone. The scriptures promise that. Consider this one:

“Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I *shall* [note that it is future tense] put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;

“For it *shall* [again note the future tense] 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.) . . .

THE SPIRIT WILL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE WITH US

Now, once you receive it, be obedient to the promptings you receive. I learned a sobering lesson as a mission president. I was also a General Authority. I had been prompted several times, for the good of the work, to release one of my counselors. Besides praying about it, I had reasoned that it was the right thing to do. But I did not do it. I feared that it would injure a man who had given long service to the Church.

The Spirit withdrew from me. I could get no promptings on who should be called as a counselor should I release him. It lasted for several weeks. My prayers seemed to be contained within the room where I offered them. I tried a number of alternate ways to arrange the work, but to no avail. Finally, I did as I was bidden to do by the Spirit. Immediately, the gift returned! Oh, the exquisite sweetness to have that gift again. You know it, for you have it, the gift of the Holy Ghost. And the brother was not injured, indeed he was greatly blessed and immediately thereafter the work prospered.

WE CAN BE DECEIVED

Be ever on guard lest you be deceived by inspiration from an unworthy source. You can be given false spiritual messages. There are counterfeit spirits just as there are counterfeit angels. (See Moro. 7:17.) Be careful lest you be deceived, for the devil may come disguised as an angel of light.

The spiritual part of us and the emotional part of us are so closely linked that it is possible to mistake an emotional impulse for something spiritual. We occasionally find people who receive what they assume to be spiritual promptings from God, when those promptings are either centered in the emotions or are from the adversary.

Avoid like a plague those who claim that some great spiritual experience authorizes them to challenge the constituted priesthood authority in the Church. Do not be unsettled if you cannot explain every insinuation of the apostate or every challenge from the enemies who attack the Lord's church. And we now face a tidal wave of that. In due time you will be able to confound the wicked and inspire the honest in heart. . . .

. . . The choicest pearl, the one of great price, is to learn at an early age how one is guided by the Spirit of the Lord—a supernal gift. Indeed, it is a guide and a protection.

“The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit, ye shall not teach.” (D&C 42:14.)

YOU CAN DO THE LORD'S WORK

There is great power in this work, spiritual power. The ordinary member of the Church, like you, having received the gift of the Holy Ghost by confirmation, can do the work of the Lord.

Years ago a friend, who long since is gone, told this experience. He was seventeen-years-old and with his companion stopped at a cottage in the southern states.

It was his first day in the mission field and was his first door. A gray-haired woman stood inside the screen and asked what they wanted. His companion nudged him to proceed. Frightened and somewhat tongue-tied, he finally blurted out, “As man is God once was, and as God is man may become.”

Strangely enough, she was interested and asked where he got that. He answered, “It's in the Bible.” She left the door for a moment, returned with her Bible. Commenting that she was a minister of a congregation, she handed it to him and said, “Here, show me.”

He took the Bible and nervously thumbed back and forth through it. Finally he handed it back saying, “Here, I can't find it. I'm not even sure that it's in there, and even if it is, I couldn't find it. I'm just a poor farm boy from out in Cache Valley in Utah. I haven't had much training. But I come from a family where we live the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it's done so much for our family that I've accepted a call to come on a mission for two years, at my own expense, to tell people how I feel about it.”

After half a century, he could not hold back the tears as he told me how she pushed open the door and said, “Come in, my boy, I'd like to hear what you have to say.”

There is great power in this work, and the ordinary member of the Church, sustained by the Spirit, can do the work of the Lord.

There is so much more to say. I could speak of prayer, of fasting, of priesthood and authority, of worthiness—all essential to revelation. When they are understood, it all fits together—perfectly. But some things one must learn individually, and alone, taught by the Spirit.

Nephi interrupted that great sermon on the Holy Ghost and on angels saying, “I . . . cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance.” (2 Ne. 32:7.) I have done the best I could with the words I have. Perchance the Spirit has opened the veil a little or confirmed to you a sacred principle of revelation, of spiritual communication.

I know by experience too sacred to touch upon that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that the Gift of the Holy Ghost conferred upon us at our confirmation is a supernal gift.

The Book of Mormon is true!

This is the Lord's Church! Jesus is the Christ! There presides over us a prophet of God! The day of miracles has not ceased, neither have angels ceased to appear and minister unto man! The spiritual gifts are with the Church. Choice among them is the gift of the Holy Ghost!

TEACHING BY THE SPIRIT—“THE LANGUAGE OF INSPIRATION”

ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL
OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

*In Old Testament Symposium
Speeches, 1991, 1–6*

We live and teach amid such a wide variety of individual personalities, experiences, cultures, languages, interests, and needs. Only the Spirit can compensate for such differences. The Lord has told us that “the sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17); it can facilitate communication and penetrate as nothing else. Thus holy scripture and the words of living prophets occupy a privileged position; they are the key to teaching by the Spirit so that we communicate in what the Prophet Joseph Smith called “the language of inspiration” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 56).

Perhaps the special, evocative powers of scriptures are bound up with our flashes of memory from the premortal world or at least call forth our predispositions nurtured for so long there.

Inspired scriptures involve sanctified words.

Staying close to the strategic scriptures does not diminish the role of tactical revelation which can guide the teacher.

Even so, being in an increasingly secularized world, we should recognize the truth of Paul’s words, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Many individuals refuse to be informed by the Spirit. However, as we all know, when speaker and hearer—writers and readers—are spiritually conjoined, it is a special thing, as revelatory reciprocity occurs:

“Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?”

“Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:21–22).

John Taylor confirmed this by saying: “There is no man living, and there never was a man living, who was capable of teaching the things of God only as he was taught, instructed and directed by the spirit of revelation proceeding from the Almighty. And then there are no people competent to receive true intelligence and to



form a correct judgment in relation to the sacred principles of eternal life, unless they are under the influence of the same spirit, and hence speakers and hearers are all in the hands of the Almighty” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:369).

We know of Joseph Smith’s special experience in reading James 1:5, “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart” (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). James was inspired to so write and Joseph to so respond to words! Others have benefitted and will continue to benefit from James 1:5, but its primary purpose was to be part of the spiritual evocation leading to the last dispensation.

The Spirit not only informs and increases mutual understanding, it convinces! The Spirit can convince the student to “experiment upon” (see Alma 32:27) the gospel, so that the prized personal verification will come and individuals come to know for themselves that these things are true.

Brigham Young said of the Spirit’s convincing power:

“Anything besides that influence, will fail to convince any person of the truth of the Gospel of salvation. . . .

“. . . But when I saw a man without eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only say, ‘I know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord,’ the Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminated my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality were before me. I was encircled by them, filled with them, and I knew for myself that the testimony of the man was true. . . . My own judgment, natural endowments, and education bowed to this simple, but mighty testimony. There sits the man who baptized me, (brother Eleazer Miller.) It filled my system with light, and my soul with joy. The world, with all its wisdom and power, and with all the glory and gilded show of its kings or potentates, sinks into perfect insignificance, compared with the simple, unadorned testimony of the servant of God” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:90–91).

Whether transmitting or receiving under the influence of the Spirit, then, we hasten the process in which an individual is “quickenened in the inner man” (Moses 6:65; see also Ephesians 3:16; Psalm 119:40). This often involves high, spiritual drama, but, more frequently, it also involves quiet moments of spiritual significance.

Yet, when we speak about teaching by the Spirit, it is not about a mystical process. Teaching does not remove responsibility from the teacher for prayerful and pondering preparation. Teaching by the Spirit is not the equivalent

of going on “automatic pilot.” We still need a carefully worked out flight plan. Studying out something in our own minds involves the Spirit in our preparations as well as in our presentations. We must not err, like Oliver Cowdery, by taking no thought except to ask God for his Spirit (see D&C 9:7).

Seeking the Spirit is best done when we ask the Lord to take the lead of an already informed mind, in which things have been “studied out.” Additionally, if we already care deeply about those to be taught, it is so much easier for the Lord to inspire us to give customized counsel and emphasis to those we teach. Thus we cannot be clinically detached when teaching by the Spirit.

An example from the secular world will help to make a point. When Winston Churchill was only twenty-three, he wrote an essay on rhetoric which was never published but was found among his papers after his death. Therein he spoke of the necessity of communicating with feeling, saying:

“Before he can inspire them with any emotion he must be swayed by it himself. . . . Before he can move their tears his own must flow. To convince them he must himself believe. . . . He who enjoys it wields a power more durable than that of a great king. He is an independent force in the world. Abandoned by his party, betrayed by his friends, stripped of his offices, whoever can command this power is still formidable” (in William Manchester, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill Alone, 1932–1940* [Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1988], p. 210).

President Harold B. Lee gave us the spiritual equivalent:

“You cannot light a fire in another soul unless it is burning in your own soul. You teachers, the testimony that you bear, the spirit with which you teach and with which you lead, is one of the most important assets that you can have, as you help to strengthen those who need so much, wherein you have so much to give” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, pp. 178–79; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 123).

This accompaniment of proper feelings, instructive in themselves, is facilitated by the eloquence of personal example. Others will respond to the added authority of example when it is present in our lives. Then the Spirit can especially attest to the authenticity of our words, and others can “believe on [our] words” (D&C 46:14).

The early faith of the beginner involves trust in the words of the faithful. At the outset, he may have “faith in the words alone of my servant” (Mosiah 26:15). “And if now thou sayest there is a God, behold I will believe” (Alma 22:7). Such discipleship brings its own rewards: “Blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them” (Mosiah 26:16).

President Joseph F. Smith urged parents, “Teach to your children these things, in spirit and power, *sustained and strengthened by personal practice*. Let them see that you are earnest, and practice what you preach” (“Worship in the Home,” *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1903, p. 138; emphasis added). It is the absence of such visible earnestness which deprives so many presentations of their desired influence even when content is commendable.

Students come to see and feel the compatibility of the Spirit’s presence with those who are seriously working on further developing the key celestial attributes and virtues. These attributes are cardinal. They are eternal. They are portable. Chief among them is “loving kindness” (see 1 Nephi 19:9; D&C 133:52). Indeed, our degree of “earnestness” is measured by our personal, spiritual improvement.

I pause to interject a few thoughts from section 133 of the Doctrine and Covenants. It speaks of Jesus’ second coming, of the dramatic solar display that will happen to the sun and the moon. Then it says, “And the stars shall be hurled from their places” (v. 49). The voice of Jesus will be heard as he speaks of having trod the winepress alone (v. 50). Then, in what seems to me to be a precious perspective, he goes on to say that we will remember his loving kindness forever and ever (v. 52). Though stars are hurled from their places, what we will remember most from that occasion is his loving kindness!

The Spirit does not impose itself on an unwilling teacher or student. Resisted, it will quickly and simply withdraw.

A wise man has said that we need to be reminded more than we need to be instructed. One of the most powerful functions of the Spirit is to bring things to our remembrance.

The Spirit stimulates pondering in hearers and encourages their intellectual honesty. It was so with Amulek, who candidly acknowledged that before his spiritual awakening he knew and yet would not know—that he was called and yet would not hear (see Alma 10:6). The Spirit induces that kind of candid reflection. It may happen in an instant with a teenager or a college student, or in a family circle or in quiet conversation. The Spirit will not tolerate intellectual dishonesty, but instead encourages intellectual honesty. This process is truly worthy of being described as the “sword of the Spirit” (see Ephesians 6:17).

Actually, the Spirit ties students to the Lord directly. Loyalties and perspectives are correlated. Even though parents and teachers “drop off,” geographically and generationally, the Spirit continues to minister. In spurning the temptation of Potiphar’s wife, ancient Joseph not only refused to be disloyal to trusting Potiphar, who had been so generous to him, he also refused to “do this great wickedness . . . against God” (Genesis 39:9; see vv. 7–20).

That kind of intellectual, spiritual arrangement stays intact over the years and is nourished over the years. It gives us courage in circumstances no one could have foreseen.

Little wonder that weekly, when we partake of the sacramental bread, we ask to have the Spirit *always* with us. Only then are we safe. Otherwise, without the Spirit, we are left to ourselves. Who would ever want to solo anyway?

There is no better example of how faith comes by hearing than what I now relate. Brigham Young was a special student of the gospel, as we all know. He went out of his way—often amid hardship—to listen to the Prophet Joseph. Later, he reflected:

“In my experience I never did let an opportunity pass of getting with the Prophet Joseph and of hearing him speak in public or in private, so that I might draw understanding from the fountain from which he spoke, that I might have it and bring it forth when it was needed. My own experience tells me that the great success with which the Lord has crowned my labors is owing to the fact of applying my heart to wisdom. I notice that even my own natural brothers when they come into my office, which is very seldom, if there are important matters on hand—when I am teaching the brethren the principles of government, and how to apply them to families, neighborhoods and nations, will leave the office as though it was a thing of no account. And this is the case with too

many of the Elders in the Church. This is mortifying to me. In the days of the Prophet Joseph, such moments were more precious to me than all the wealth of the world. No matter how great my poverty—if I had to borrow meal to feed my wife and children, I never let an opportunity pass of learning what the Prophet had to impart” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:269–70).

The Spirit brings substance as well as feeling. Note these examples from scripture:

“These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man” (D&C 18:34).

“Believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me” (2 Nephi 33:10).

“The word had a . . . more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than . . . anything else” (Alma 31:5).

When a man works by faith he “works by words” (see *Lectures on Faith* 7:3).

“But this generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10).

Having talked of those basic dimensions of teaching by the Spirit, may I suggest some *do's* and *don'ts*. The following *do's* and *don'ts* affect the learning climate. The *do's* will invite the Spirit and the *don'ts* will discourage it.

Do	DON'T
1. Focus on the teaching moment by becoming settled and serene in your own heart.	1. Be upset by Martha-like anxieties. Recall how Joseph Smith was once ineffective after he and Emma had a disagreement? Inviting the Spirit is difficult, but it won't come if we are crowded with other concerns.
2. Be meek and "I will tell you in your mind" (D&C 8:2).	2. Try to impress in order to be heard or seen of men.
3. Have considerable eye contact with and listen to the students.	3. Be so busy presenting that either listening to the Spirit or to the students is not possible. Don't expect the class to listen to you when you are not listening to the Spirit.
4. Use inspired one-liners which will be remembered and retained.	4. Multiply words or concepts. Would we cherish the Sermon on the Mount if it filled three volumes?
5. Know the substance of what is being presented. Ponder and pray over its simple focus.	5. Present a "smorgasbord," hoping someone will find something of value. The lack of focus leaves the receivers uncertain.
6. Proffer relevant applications and implications of what is being taught.	6. Answer questions no one is asking.
7. Ask inspired questions.	7. Be afraid of questions.
8. Be prepared to learn from what you say while under the influence of the Spirit. I heard President Marion G. Romney say on several occasions, "I always know when I am speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost because I always learn something from what I've said" (in Boyd K. Packer, <i>Teach Ye Diligently</i> [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], p. 304).	8. Be afraid to ponder in front of the students.
9. Provide moments of deliberate pause. The Spirit will supply its own "evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).	9. Be afraid of inspired silences.
10. Let the doctrines speak for themselves. "Every principle God has revealed carries its own convictions of its truth to the human mind" (Brigham Young, in <i>Journal of Discourses</i> , 9:149).	10. End up "selling" the doctrines. Professor Arthur Henry King wrote of Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision: "When I was first brought to read Joseph Smith's story, I was deeply impressed. I wasn't inclined to be impressed. As a stylistician, I have spent my life being disinclined to be impressed. So when I read his story, I thought to myself, this is an extraordinary thing. This is an astonishingly matter-of-fact and cool account. This man is not trying to persuade me of anything. He doesn't feel the need to. He is stating what happened to him, and he is stating it, not enthusiastically, but in quite a matter-of-fact way. He is not trying to make me cry or feel ecstatic. That struck me, and that began to build my testimony, for I could see that this man was telling the truth. . . . ". . . And it isn't the prose of someone who is trying to work it out and make it nice. It is the prose of someone who is trying to tell it as it is, who is bending all his faculties to expressing the truth and not thinking about anything else—and above all, though writing about Joseph Smith, not thinking about Joseph Smith, not thinking about the effect he is going to have on others, not posturing, not posing, but just being himself" (<i>The Abundance of the Heart</i> [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], pp. 200–201).
11. Bear your testimony appropriately and specifically.	11. Just say "I have a testimony."

Of course there are individuals who are keeping their covenants who lack teaching charisma. Of course there are those whose lives are in order who are not exciting as teachers. However, the Spirit blesses the efforts of all who live worthily. It endorses what they say or do. There is a witnessing authenticity which proceeds from the commandment keeper, which speaks for itself. Therefore, I prefer doctrinal accuracy and spiritual certitude (even with a little dullness) to charisma with unanchored cleverness.

However, part of what may be lacking, at times, in the decent teacher is a freshening personal excitement over the gospel which could prove highly contagious. Since we can only speak the smallest part of what we feel, we should not let that "smallest part" shrink in its size.

Finally, as in the words of the Book of Mormon prophet, "O be wise; what can I say more?" (Jacob 6:12).

I close by sharing with you several examples. Your examples are at least as good or better than mine.

It was a Sunday night about thirty years ago. We had assembled in the institute at the University of Utah. President Hugh B. Brown was supposed to be the speaker. Time for the meeting came, and he was not there. Those who had planned the meeting were much concerned and embarrassed at the "mix up." On that night we had with us the highly articulate Richard L. Evans. While Elder Evans spoke to us, someone was sent out to fetch President Brown. They found him walking around the block on which his house was located. He hurried quickly and changed and came and spoke to us. And it was one of the marvelous experiences of my life. Under the direction of the Spirit, he taught us about the Restoration and gave us his testimony. None of us who were there will ever forget.

I remember being present in the auditorium of the high rise, April 1974. President Spencer W. Kimball was giving what, in effect, was his maiden speech as President of the Church. His first press conference, in his meekness, indicated he would simply be content, if he could, to keep things on the same track that President Lee had worked on. On that day there came the electricity in his address, "Go ye into all the world." We felt it! President Benson, as the President of the Twelve, commented upon it after. We were all moved and touched. There was a meeting, in the timetable of the Lord, of the man and the moment. The Spirit endorsed it, and we felt the vibrancy of that occasion. As indicated earlier, whether it is in a large audience or simply in a conversation of two people, the Spirit operates.

I think of the inspired question asked a little over a year ago by the head of the Critchfield family in Payson, Utah. Their son, Stanley, had been stabbed to death in Dublin,

Ireland, while serving on a mission there. The shock and disappointment came with the notification. Then that humble father asked the little brother of fifteen, "Son, in about four years you will be nineteen. The prophet is going to call you to go on a mission. You see what has happened to your brother Stanley. What are you going to do?" "I'll go, Dad. I'll go" was the reply. The Spirit sanctified that inspired question and response as it sanctifies communication in large congregations. Frozen in time and space is the marvelous, wonderful response of that lad who is now saving his money to go on a mission. His response, after all, does not differ that much, does it, from the words of Nephi, "I will go and do"?

I have mentioned inspired silence. As one who has had a bit of a tendency to fill silence in, it has been difficult for me to learn at times to be still. Happily, there have been a few such occasions. I learned indirectly of a World War II buddy who was recuperating in a Phoenix hospital from heart problems. A good seventy in the local ward wrote me a letter, telling me of my friend's difficulty. I had lost track of him for what would have been thirty years. I wrote him a letter, then called him, and sent him some literature. Then I called him again after he had gone home to Duncan, Arizona. "How are you doing, Harry?" "Fine." "Have you read what I sent?" "Yes, I've read some, but . . ." "Harry, I want to come down and baptize you." Long pause. Fortunately, I didn't rush in to fill it. Then came his words, "Would you do that?" So, soon I traveled over to Duncan, Arizona, and had the great privilege of baptizing and confirming my friend, Harry White. The Spirit operated upon him. He had a wonderful wife who was a member of the Church and others who, for years, had tried to speed his conversion. Do not be afraid of silence!

You all know the scripture, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). You and I may translate that into what is our equivalent of, "Be quiet." It is not that. It is to "be still." In that special stillness there comes a subduing and a focusing. Extraneous things are extruded. Be still, and let that stillness operate on those special occasions when the Spirit informs, inspires, or may call something to someone's remembrance.

How blessed we are to know what we know, to be called to do what we do, to be in his kingdom. Yes, this is a time of increasing secularization. It is a time in which the things of the Spirit look like foolishness to more and more people on this planet. But those who know, know that they know.

Sister Maxwell and I were at a fireside for single adults a few months ago. Among those who were kind enough to come up and shake hands was a divorcee. She did not speak with me; she spoke with Colleen, though I shook her hand. She handed to me a little note that said, "I

remember knowing, but I don't know anymore." Among those whom you will inspire are those who once knew, but do not remember anymore. Some like Amulek knew, but would not know, but resist.

How blessed we are that the Spirit enhances what we do with our own meager talents. May God bless you and sustain you. May he give to you the sense of how important you are to the work of this kingdom and generations yet unborn who will in the years to come, and surely throughout all eternity, rise up and call you blessed.

THE POWER OF THE WORD

**PRESIDENT EZRA TAFT
BENSON**

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

*Excerpt from Ensign, May 1986,
79–82*



We live in a day of great challenge. We live in that time of which the Lord spoke when he said, "Peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion." (D&C 1:35.) We live in that day which John the Revelator foresaw when "the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev. 12:17.) The dragon is Satan; the woman represents the Church of Jesus Christ. Satan is waging war against the members of the Church who have testimonies and are trying to keep the commandments. And while many of our members are remaining faithful and strong, some are wavering. Some are falling. Some are fulfilling John's prophecy that in the war with Satan, some Saints would be overcome. (See Rev. 13:7.) . . .

The Apostle Paul also saw our day. He described it as a time when such things as blasphemy, dishonesty, cruelty, unnatural affection, pride, and pleasure seeking would abound. (See 2 Tim. 3:1–7.) He also warned that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13.)

Such grim predictions by prophets of old would be cause for great fear and discouragement if those same prophets had not, at the same time, offered the solution. In their inspired counsel we can find the answer to the spiritual crises of our age.

In his dream, Lehi saw an iron rod which led through the mists of darkness. He saw that if people would hold fast

On those long morning drives on a winter road, when so few seem to appreciate what you are doing, know that you are about your Father's business. He will bless you with his Spirit. You will know the joy of being encircled in the appreciation of those you have taught. Let them see you as men and women of Christ, in the process of becoming, and you will have his Spirit to be with you, always! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

to that rod, they could avoid the rivers of filthiness, stay away from the forbidden paths, stop from wandering in the strange roads that lead to destruction. Later his son Nephi clearly explained the symbolism of the iron rod. When Laman and Lemuel asked, "What meaneth the rod of iron?" Nephi answered, "It was the word of God; and [note this promise] *whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.*" (1 Ne. 15:23–24; italics added.) Not only will the word of God lead us to the fruit which is desirable above all others, but in the word of God and through it we can find the power to resist temptation, the power to thwart the work of Satan and his emissaries.

Paul's message is the same as Lehi's. After portraying the terrible wickedness of future times—future to him, but present to us!—he said this to Timothy: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned. . . .

"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, *which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.*" (2 Tim. 3:14–15; italics added.)

My dear brethren, this is an answer to the great challenge of our time. The word of God, as found in the scriptures, in the words of living prophets, and in personal revelation, has the power to fortify the Saints and arm them with the Spirit so they can resist evil, hold fast to the good, and find joy in this life. . . .

. . . In recent years, time and again we have counseled you that certain activities bring greater spiritual returns than others. As early as 1970, President Harold B. Lee told the regional representatives:

"We are convinced that our members are hungry for the gospel, undiluted, with its abundant truths and insights. . . . There are those who have seemed to forget that the most powerful weapons the Lord has given us against all that is evil are His own declarations, the plain simple doctrines of

salvation as found in the scriptures.” (In Regional Representatives’ Seminar, 1 Oct. 1970, p. 6.)

In a First Presidency message in 1976, President [Spencer W.] Kimball said:

“I am convinced that each of us, at least some time in our lives, must discover the scriptures for ourselves—and not just discover them once, but rediscover them again and again. . . .

“The Lord is not trifling with us when he gives us these things, for ‘unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.’ (Luke 12:48.) Access to these things means responsibility for them. We must study the scriptures according to the Lord’s commandment (see 3 Ne. 23:1–5); and we must let them govern our lives.” (*Ensign*, Sept. 1976, pp. 4–5.)

In April 1982, Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke to the regional representatives about the priority the scriptures should take in our labors. He said: “We are so wound up in programs and statistics and trends, in properties, lands and mammon, and in achieving goals that will highlight the excellence of our work, that we have ‘omitted the weightier matters of the law.’ . . . However talented men may be in administrative matters; however eloquent they may be in expressing their views; however learned they may be in the worldly things—they will be denied the sweet whisperings of the Spirit that might have been theirs unless they pay the price of studying, pondering, and praying about the scriptures.” (In Regional Representatives’ Seminar, 2 Apr. 1982, pp. 1–2.) . . .

. . . Often we spend great effort in trying to increase the activity levels in our stakes. We work diligently to raise the percentages of those attending sacrament meetings. We labor to get a higher percentage of our young men on missions. We strive to improve the numbers of those marrying in the temple. All of these are commendable

efforts and important to the growth of the kingdom. But when individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, these other areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow.

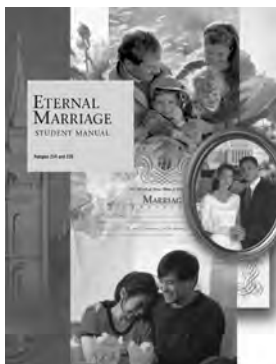
The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and *a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts*, than by any other book.” (Book of Mormon, Introduction, italics added.) Isn’t that what we want for the members of our wards and stakes? Aren’t we desirous that they get nearer to God? Then encourage them in every way possible to immerse themselves in this marvelous latter-day witness of Christ.

You must help the Saints see that studying and searching the scriptures is not a burden laid upon them by the Lord, but a marvelous blessing and opportunity. . . .

Oh, my brethren, let us not treat lightly the great things we have received from the hand of the Lord! His word is one of the most valuable gifts He has given us. I urge you to recommit yourselves to a study of the scriptures. Immerse yourselves in them daily so you will have the power of the Spirit to attend you in your callings. Read them in your families and teach your children to love and treasure them. Then prayerfully and in counsel with others, seek every way possible to encourage the members of the Church to follow your example. If you do so, you will find, as Alma did, that “the word [has] a great tendency to lead people to do that which [is] just—yea, it [has] more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which [has] happened unto them.” (Alma 31:5.)

Like Alma, I say unto you, “It [is] expedient that [you] should try the virtues of the word of God” (Alma 31:5), in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

LIVING BY GOSPEL PRINCIPLES



Eternal Marriage Student Manual (*religion 234 and 235, 2003*), *viii–ix*

GOVERNING OUR LIVES WITH PRINCIPLES

President Ezra Taft Benson counseled: “One of the most important things you can do . . . is to immerse yourselves in the scriptures. Search them

diligently. Feast upon the words of Christ. Learn the doctrine. Master the principles that are found therein” (“The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 81).

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, stated: “As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them. 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. It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 117; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 86).

Knowing and living by correct principles is essential to a happy life and a happy marriage. Gospel principles include doctrine, commandments, covenants, ordinances, and precepts. . . .

WE MUST DO OUR PART

Principles can often be divided into two main parts: *if* and *then*. The *if* part is a statement of general counsel from the Lord. The *then* part is the promised results of obeying or disobeying that counsel.

God called the Word of Wisdom “a principle with promise” (D&C 89:3). The *if* part is the counsel to keep our bodies physically and spiritually pure. The *then* part promises health, wisdom, strength, and other blessings.

The Lord keeps His promises: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). We must do our part to qualify for the blessings (see D&C 130:20–22). We should also remember that God determines the *then* part according to His wisdom and not according to our expectations.

Principles are not always taught or written in the *if-then* format. For example, General Authorities do not always

say “*if* you have faith, *then* you will have the Lord’s power in your life.” Instead, they may relate examples that illustrate faith or motivate us to be faithful.

GOSPEL PRINCIPLES ARE UNIVERSAL

Gospel principles are universal—they are true in all situations in all cultures at all times. The principles revealed to Adam in the beginning of the world are just as true in these latter days. We have prophets, scriptures, and the influence of the Holy Ghost to help us see and apply correct principles.

SUMMARY

A principle is an enduring truth, law, or rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions. Principles help us apply the doctrines of the gospel to everyday living. They give us a light to illuminate the path before us in an increasingly confused and wicked world.

FINDING ANSWERS TO GOSPEL QUESTIONS

**ELDER BRUCE R.
MCCKONKIE**

**OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES**

*Open letter, about 1980,
Historical Department Archives,
The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints*

To: Honest Truth Seekers

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

I receive a flood of letters asking questions about the doctrines, practices, and history of the Church. Several thousand questions are presented to me each year. Recently I received a single letter containing 210 major questions plus numerous lesser ones. To answer the questions in this one letter alone would have taken several hundred pages. Frequently I have a stack of unanswered letters which is six or eight inches high. There are times when weeks go by without an opportunity even to read the letters let alone attempt to answer them.

Thoughtful persons will realize that if I devoted all my waking hours to the research and work involved in answering the questions which come to me, I still would not be able to answer all of them. But—and this is far more important—if I were able to perform this service it still would not be the right thing to do nor be in the best interests of those who present their problems to me. May



I instead make the following general suggestions to those who seek answers to gospel questions:

1. SEEK LIGHT AND TRUTH.

All men everywhere, in and out of the Church, without reference to sect, party, or denomination, are obligated to seek light and truth. The Light of Christ comes as a free gift to all men; it enlighteneth every man born into the world; and those who follow its promptings seek truth, gain knowledge and understanding, and are led to the gospel and its saving truths.

Members of the Church have an added obligation to understand both the laws of nature and the doctrines of salvation. They have the gift of the Holy Ghost which is the right to the constant companionship of this member of the Godhead based on faithfulness. The Holy Ghost is a revelator. “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” (Moro. 10:5.) In the full and final sense, the only perfect and absolute way to gain a sure knowledge of any truth in any field is to receive personal revelation from the Holy Spirit of God. This heaven-sent boon is reserved for those who keep the commandments and obtain the companionship of the Holy Spirit. Be it remembered that the Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle.

2. SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

The answers to nearly all important doctrinal questions are found in the Standard Works or in the sermons and writings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. If they are not

found in these sources, they probably are not essential to salvation and may well be beyond our present spiritual capacity to understand. New revelations will be given when we believe and understand and live in harmony with those truths we have already received.

The way to achieve a high state of gospel scholarship is first to study and ponder and pray about the Book of Mormon and then to follow the same course with reference to the other scriptures. The Book of Mormon contains that portion of the Lord's word which he has given to the world to prepare the way for an understanding of the Bible and the other revelations now had among us. We have been commanded to search the scriptures, all of them; to treasure up the Lord's word, lest we be deceived; to drink deeply from the fountain of holy writ, that our thirst for knowledge may be quenched.

Paul says the scriptures are able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15.) They lead us to the true Church and the legal administrators whom God has appointed to administer his work on earth. It is far better for us to gain our answers from the scriptures than from something someone else says about them. It is true that we oftentimes need an inspired interpreter to help us understand what apostles and prophets have written for us in the Standard Works. But it is also true that many explanations given by many people as to the meaning of scriptural passages are somewhat less than true and edifying.

We are in a far better position if we are able to drink directly from the scriptural fountain without having the waters muddied by others whose insights are not as great as were those of the prophetic writers who first penned the passages found in the accepted canon of holy writ. I am not rejecting proper scriptural commentaries; I know and appreciate their value and have written volumes of them myself; I am simply saying that people with the ability to do it would be far better off to create their own commentaries. There is something sacred and solemn and saving about studying the scriptures themselves. We should train ourselves in this direction.

3. TRUE DOCTRINES ARE IN HARMONY WITH THE STANDARD WORKS.

The Standard Works are scripture. They are binding upon us. They are the mind and will and voice of the Lord. He never has, he does not now, and he never will reveal anything which is contrary to what is in them. No person, speaking by the spirit of inspiration, will ever teach doctrine that is out of harmony with the truths God has already revealed.

These words of President Joseph Fielding Smith should guide all of us in our gospel study: "It makes no difference what is written or what anyone has said, if what has been

said is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside. My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them. Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man's doctrine.

"You cannot accept the books written by the authorities of the Church as standards in doctrine, only in so far as they accord with the revealed word in the standard works.

"Every man who writes is responsible, not the Church, for what he writes. If Joseph Fielding Smith writes something which is out of harmony with the revelations, then every member of the Church is duty bound to reject it. If he writes that which is in perfect harmony with the revealed word of the Lord, then it should be accepted." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 3:203–4; also cited in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], p. 609.)

4. SEEK TO HARMONIZE SCRIPTURAL AND PROPHETIC UTTERANCES.

Every truth, in every field, in all the earth, and in all eternity, is in complete and total harmony with every other truth. Truth is always in harmony with itself. The word of the Lord is truth, and no scripture ever contradicts another, nor is any inspired statement of any person out of harmony with an inspired statement of any other person. Paul and James did not have differing views on faith and works, and everything that Alma said about the resurrection accords with Section 76 in the Doctrine and Covenants. When we find seeming conflicts, it means we have not as yet caught the full vision of whatever points are involved.

The Lord expects us to seek for harmony and agreement in the scriptures and among the Brethren rather than for seeming divergences of views. Those who have faith and understanding always seek to harmonize into one perfect whole all the statements of the scriptures and all the pronouncements of the Brethren. The unfortunate complex in some quarters to pounce upon this bit of information or that and conclude that it is at variance with what someone else has said is not of God. Over the years I have received thousands of letters saying, "So-and-So said one thing, but Some-One-Else said the reverse—who is right?" My experience is that in most instances—nay, in almost all instances—the seeming divergencies can be harmonized, and when they cannot be it is of no moment anyway. The Spirit of the Lord leads to harmony and unity and agreement and oneness. The spirit of the devil champions division and debate and contention and disunity.

5. ARE ALL PROPHETIC UTTERANCES TRUE?

Of course they are! This is what the Lord's system of teaching is all about. Anything which his servants say when moved upon by the Holy Ghost is scripture, and his command to his ministers is: "The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach." (D&C 42:14.)

But every word that a man who is a prophet speaks is not a prophetic utterance. Joseph Smith taught that a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he is acting as such. Men who wear the prophetic mantle are still men; they have their own views; and their understanding of gospel truths is dependent upon the study and inspiration that is theirs.

Some prophets—I say it respectfully—know more and have greater inspiration than others. Thus, if Brigham Young, who was one of the greatest of the prophets, said something about Adam which is out of harmony with what is in the Book of Moses and in Section 78, it is the scripture that prevails. This is one of the reasons we call our scriptures *The Standard Works*. They are the standard of judgment and the measuring rod against which all doctrines and views are weighed, and it does not make one particle of difference whose views are involved. The scriptures always take precedence.

6. LEAVE THE MYSTERIES ALONE AND AVOID GOSPEL HOBBIES.

We do not and in our present state of spiritual progression cannot comprehend all things. We do not have the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon because we are not prepared to understand and live the truths found therein. Some things in the scriptures are hidden from full view in parables, similitudes, and imagery. We are obligated to understand the basic doctrines which lead to eternal life; beyond this, how much we know about the mysteries depends upon the degree of our spiritual enlightenment. It is unwise to swim too far in water over our heads. My experience is that people who get themselves ensnared in fruitless contention over the meanings of deep and hidden passages of scripture are usually those who do not have a sound and basic understanding of the simple and basic truths of salvation.

It is also my experience that people who ride gospel hobbies, who try to qualify themselves as experts in some specialized field, who try to make the whole plan of salvation revolve around some field of particular interest to them—it is my experience that such persons are usually spiritually immature and spiritually unstable. This includes those who devote themselves—as though by divine appointment—to setting forth the signs of the times; or, to expounding about the Second Coming; or, to a fadist interpretation of the Word of Wisdom; or, to a twisted

emphasis on temple work or any other doctrine or practice. The Jews of Jesus' day made themselves hobbyists and extremists in the field of Sabbath observance, and it colored and blackened their whole way of worship. We would do well to have a sane, rounded, and balanced approach to the whole gospel and all of its doctrines.

7. BE NOT OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT UNIMPORTANT MATTERS.

There is so much to learn about the great eternal verities which shape our destiny that it seems a shame to turn our attention everlastingly to the minutia and insignificant things. So often questions like this are asked: "I know it is not essential to my salvation, but I would really like to know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin and if it makes any difference whether the pin is made of brass or bronze?" There is such a thing as getting so tied up with little fly specks on the great canvas which depicts the whole plan of salvation that we lose sight of what the life and the light and the glory of eternal reward are all about. There is such a thing as virtually useless knowledge, the acquisition of which won't make one iota of difference to the destiny of the kingdom or the salvation of its subjects.

8. WITHHOLD JUDGMENT, IF NEED BE, ON HARD QUESTIONS.

To those with full insight and complete understanding there are no hard questions. After a mystery has been solved it is no longer a mystery. But there are some questions which seem to invite intellectual forays into unknown areas, or which seem to ensnare, in endless contention, those who are somewhat less than spiritually literate.

If you cannot believe all of the doctrines of the gospel, withhold judgment in the areas in question. Do not commit yourself to a position which is contrary to that espoused by the prophets and apostles who preside over the kingdom. Study, pray, work in the Church, and await further light and knowledge.

If you are troubled about so-called evolution, and have not learned that Adam was both the first man and the first mortal flesh, and that there was no death of any form of life until after the fall—withhold judgment and do not take a stand against the scriptures.

If you suppose God is progressing and gaining more knowledge and truth, and that he is not really omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent as Joseph Smith taught—withhold judgment. Remain silent. Do not lock yourself into a position contrary to the revealed word.

If you think there will be progression from one kingdom of glory to another after the resurrection; or that people

who reject the gospel in this life will have a second chance to gain salvation in the world to come; or that couples who are married in the temple can commit all manner of sin and still gain salvation; or any of a host of the common heresies of the hour—withhold judgment. Do not commit yourself to the defense of a false cause. Study something else and await the day when you will be prepared for more light on the matter that troubles you.

9. IGNORE, IF YOU CAN, THE ENDLESS ARRAY OF ANTI-MORMON LITERATURE AND AVOID CULTS LIKE A PLAGUE.

Conversion is not born of contention. He that hath the spirit of contention is not of God. Our divine commission is to declare glad tidings to the world, not to quarrel with others about the meaning of texts. There are, of course, answers to all of the false claims of those who array themselves against us—I do not believe the devil has had a new idea for a hundred years—but conversion is not found in the dens of debate. It comes rather to those who read the Book of Mormon in the way Moroni counseled. Most members of the Church would be better off if they simply ignored the specious claims of the professional anti-Mormons.

If the false claims about salvation by grace alone, or whatever the anti-Mormon literature is proclaiming, if these claims trouble you, search out the answers. They are in the scriptures. Anyone who cannot learn from the Bible that salvation does not come by simply confessing the Lord with one's lips, without reference to all the other terms and conditions of the true plan of salvation, does not deserve to be saved.

And as to the cults—they are the gate to hell. Members of the Church who espouse the cultish practice of plural marriage, for instance, are adulterers, and adulterers are damned. The common approach of those who propagandize for this practice is to pit the sayings of the dead prophets against those of the living prophets. Anyone who follows a dead prophet rather than a living prophet will follow him to death rather than to life. Again, there are answers to all the specious cultist views, and those who are tainted by these false and forlorn fallacies had better find the truth at the peril of their salvation. It is the course of safety and wisdom never to get mixed up in these matters in the first instance.

10. THERE ARE NO PRIVATE DOCTRINES.

All of the doctrines and practices of the Church are taught publicly. There are no secret doctrines, no private practices, no courses of conduct approved for a few only. The blessings of the gospel are for all men. Do not be deceived into believing that the General Authorities believe any secret doctrines or have any private ways of

living. Everything that is taught and practiced in the Church is open to public inspection, or, at least, where temple ordinances are concerned, to the inspection and knowledge of everyone who qualifies himself by personal righteousness to enter the house of the Lord.

11. MAINTAIN AN OPEN MIND.

The doctrines are the Lord's. He established them; he reveals them; he expects us to accept them. Often those who ask questions are more interested in sustaining a pre-chosen position than in learning *what* the facts are. Our concern should be to find and cleave to the truth. It should not matter to us what the doctrine is, only that we come to a knowledge of it. Our espousal and defense of a false doctrine will not make it true. Our concern is to come to a knowledge of the truth, not to prove a point to which we may unwisely have committed ourselves.

12. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDY IS A PERSONAL ONE.

Now let us come to the conclusion of this whole matter, a conclusion that will have an important bearing on our eternal salvation. It is that each person must learn the doctrines of the gospel for himself. No one else can do it for him. Each person stands alone where gospel scholarship is concerned; each has access to the same scriptures and is entitled to the guidance of the same Holy Spirit; each must pay the price set by a Divine Providence if he is to gain the pearl of great price.

The same principle governs both learning truth and living in harmony with its standards. No one can repent for and on behalf of another; no one can keep the commandments in the place and stead of another; no one can be saved in someone else's name. And no one can gain a testimony or press forward in light and truth to eternal glory for anyone but himself. Both the knowledge of the truth and the blessings that come to those who conform to true principles are personal matters. And as a just God offers the same salvation to every soul who lives the same laws, so he offers the same understanding of his eternal truths to all who will pay the truth seeker's price.

The Church system for gaining gospel knowledge is as follows:

- a. The responsibility rests upon each person to gain a knowledge of the truth through his own efforts.
- b. Next, families should teach their own family members. Parents are commanded to bring up their children in light and truth. The home should be the chief teaching center in the life of a Latter-day Saint.
- c. To help families and individuals, the Church, as a service agency, provides many opportunities to teach

and to learn. We are commanded to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.” (D&C 88:77.) This is done in sacrament meetings, in conferences and other meetings, by home teachers, in priesthood and auxiliary classes, through our seminaries and institutes, and through the Church educational system.

Opportunities to learn are unlimited. Proper questions may be discussed in any of the classes and schools provided for such purposes.

One final word seems appropriate. There are few joys in life to compare with the joy of coming to a knowledge of truth. How faithful people rejoice in the testimonies that are theirs! And what a spirit of exhilaration and peace comes into the heart of a gospel student each time a new truth is manifest to him! Each time his views expand to

catch the full vision of some prophetic passage! Each time his soul both learns and feels the import of what the revelations say about some great principle!

The foregoing expressions are made in an attempt to be helpful; to encourage gospel scholarship; and to guide truth seekers in a wise and proper course.

It is my prayer that all of us may learn and live the gospel and gain an eventual inheritance in the everlasting kingdom of Him whose servants we are.

With every good wish, and a prayer that the Lord will bless you always, I am,

Sincerely your brother,

[signed]

Bruce R. McConkie

THAT YOU MAY INSTRUCT MORE PERFECTLY

PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

Excerpt from Improvement Era, August 1956, 557

There are three things which must guide all teachers: first, get into the subject; second, get that subject into you; third, try to lead your pupils to get the subject into them—not pouring it into them, but leading them to see what you see, to know what you know, to feel what you feel.



FALSE TEACHINGS

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH
PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

Excerpt from Gospel Doctrine, 14th edition (1966), 373

Among the Latter-day Saints, the preaching of false doctrines disguised as truths of the gospel, may be expected from people of two classes, and practically from these only; they are:

First—The hopelessly ignorant, whose lack of intelligence is due to their indolence and sloth, who make but feeble effort, if



indeed any at all, to better themselves by reading and study; those who are afflicted with a dread disease that may develop into an incurable malady—laziness.

Second—The proud and self-vaunting ones, who read by the lamp of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving; who have become a law unto themselves, and so pose as the sole judges of their own doings. More dangerously ignorant than the first.

Beware of the lazy and the proud; their infection in each case is contagious; better for them and for all when they are compelled to display the yellow flag of warning, that the clean and uninfected may be protected.

LOYALTY

ELDER HAROLD B. LEE OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from address to religious educators, 8 July 1966, 7, 9 in Charge to Religious Educators, 3rd edition (1994), 119

As teachers of our youth, you're not supposed to know anything except Jesus Christ and him crucified. On that subject you're expected to be an expert. You're expected to know your subject. You're expected to have a testimony. And in that you'll have great strength. If the president of the Church has not declared the position of



the Church, then you shouldn't go shopping for the answer.

Now sometimes we have someone in your position write a number of letters to the General Authorities, and if it happens to be anyone less than the president of the Church, he'll get just about as many answers as he sends letters. And then he has a Roman holiday. He parades this, "Why here, the General Authorities are split wide open because they don't agree." Now all of that can be construed in the communities where you are as the rankest kind of disloyalty to the General Authorities. Remember that. That's an important matter. . . .

. . . So we come to conference after conference not bringing forth new doctrine. Now you as teachers are not being sent out to teach new doctrine. You're to teach the old doctrines, not so plainly that they can just understand, *but you must teach the doctrines of the Church so plainly that no one can misunderstand.*

THE FOOLISHNESS OF TEACHING

ELDER BRUCE R. MCCONKIE OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from address to religious educators, 18 September 1981, 6, 9, 11, 14–15

I shall suggest to you five things that compose and comprise the teacher's divine commission. . . .



1. We are commanded to teach the principles of the gospel. . . .
2. We are to teach the principles of the gospel as they are found in the standard works. . . .
3. We are to teach by the power of the Holy Ghost. . . .
4. We are to apply the gospel principles taught to the needs and circumstances of our hearers. . . .
5. We must testify that what we teach is true.

HOW TO GET PERSONAL REVELATION

ELDER BRUCE R. MCCONKIE OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

New Era, June 1980, 46–50

I would like to touch upon some spiritual realities and on some of the basic things that we need to do to work out our salvation and to be worthy, representative members of God's kingdom here in this life and to qualify for eternal reward in the



realms to be. I would like to deal with the matter of receiving personal revelation, particularly how to gain personal revelation—how each individual member of the Church can come to know of the divinity of the work, can have the whisperings of the Spirit in his heart and soul, and in addition, can see visions, entertain angels, behold the face of the Lord, and receive all the knowledge and wisdom that has been poured out upon faithful people in any age.

As a people, we are in the habit of saying that we believe in latter-day revelation. We announce quite boldly that the heavens have been opened, that God has spoken in our day, that angels have ministered to men, that there have been visions and revelations, and that no gift or

grace possessed by the ancients has been withheld—it has all been revealed anew in our day.

But, ordinarily, when we talk in this way, we are thinking of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or Spencer W. Kimball. We are thinking of apostles and prophets—men who are called, selected, or foreordained to hold the positions that they hold and to do the ministerial service that is theirs. We are thinking of them and of the general principle of the Church itself operating by revelation.

Now there is no question at all about this: The organization that we belong to is the Lord's kingdom—it is literally such. As the kingdom of God on earth, it is designed to prepare and qualify us to go to the kingdom of God in heaven, which is the celestial kingdom, and this Church *is* guided by revelation. I have sat in meetings with the Brethren on several occasions when the prophet of God on earth has said in humility and with fervent testimony that the veil is thin, that the Lord is guiding and directing the affairs of the Church, and that it is his Church and he is making his will manifest.

There *is* inspiration at the head, and the Church is in the line and course of its duty; it is progressing in the way that the Lord would have it progress so that, as rapidly as our strength permits, his message can go to his other children in the world and so that we, as members of the kingdom, can cleanse and perfect our lives and be worthy of the choicest blessings here and hereafter.

But what I desire to point attention to is the fact that revelation is not restricted to the prophet of God on earth. The visions of eternity are not reserved for Apostles—they are not reserved for the General Authorities. Revelation is something that should be received by every individual. God is no respecter of persons, and every soul, in the ultimate sense, is just as precious in his sight as the souls of those who are called to positions of leadership. Because he operates on principles of eternal, universal, and never-deviating law, any individual who abides the law that entitles him to get revelation can know exactly and precisely what President Kimball knows, can entertain angels just as well as Joseph Smith entertained them, and can be in tune in full measure with all of the things of the Spirit.

Now for a text I present to you these words of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said:

“Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 324.)

Now note this statement: “Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.” I think our concern is to get personal revelation, to know for ourselves, independent of any other individual or set of individuals, what the mind and the will of the Lord is as pertaining to us in our individual concerns and to receive confirmation of his mind and will as pertaining to his church.

I suppose that we can divide the realm of inquiry into an intellectual field and a spiritual field. While we are in school we are seeking knowledge primarily in the intellectual field, which knowledge probably comes in most instances by reason and through the senses.

This is a tremendously vital and important thing—we encourage it and we urge it upon all people who desire to progress and have enlightenment and advancement in their lives.

But my suggestion is that we need to devote an increasingly large portion of our time in the actual pursuit of knowledge in the spiritual realm. When we deal with spiritual realities, we are not talking about gaining something by reason alone, we are not talking about conveying in some way knowledge to the mind or the spirit that is within us through the senses alone, but we are talking about revelation. We are talking about learning how to come to a knowledge of the things of God by attuning the spirit that we have to the eternal Spirit of God. Such a course, primarily, is the channel and way that revelation comes to an individual.

It does not concern me very much that somebody writes or evaluates or analyzes either a doctrinal or a Church problem of any sort when he does it from the standpoint of the intellect alone. No one questions that everything in the spiritual realm is in total and complete accord with the intellectual realities that we arrive at through reason, but when the two are compared and evaluated and weighed as to their relative merits, the things that are important are in the *spiritual realm* and not the intellectual. The things of God are known only by the Spirit of God.

It is true that you can reason about doctrinal matters, but you do not get religion into your life until it becomes a matter of *personal experience*—until you feel something in your soul, until there has been a change made in your heart, until you become a new creature of the Holy Ghost. Providentially, *every* member of the Church has the opportunity to do this because, in connection with baptism, every member of the Church has the hands of a legal administrator placed on his head, and he is given the promise, “Receive the Holy Ghost.” He thus obtains “the gift of the Holy Ghost” which, by definition, means that

he then has the right to the constant companionship of this member of the Godhead, based upon his personal righteousness and faithfulness.

Now I say that we are *entitled* to revelation. I say that every member of the Church, independent and irrespective of any position that he may hold, is entitled to get revelation from the Holy Ghost; he is entitled to entertain angels; he is entitled to view the visions of eternity; and if we would like to go the full measure, he is entitled to see God the same way that any prophet in literal and actual reality has seen the face of Deity.

We talk about latter-day prophets; we think in terms of prophets who tell the future destiny of the Church and the world. But, in addition to that, the fact is that *every person should be a prophet for himself and in his own concerns and in his own affairs*. It was Moses who said, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them” (Num. 11:29).

It was Paul who said, “Covet to prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:39).

They counsel that, with all our heart and with all our strength, as individuals, for our private and personal concerns, we should seek the gift of prophecy.

Let me take occasion to read a few statements from the revelations and the Prophet Joseph Smith that taken together outline the formula (as it were) by which I as an individual and you as an individual can come to know the things of God by the power of the Spirit.

One thing the Lord said was: “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

“Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation.” (D&C 8:2–3.)

This revelation speaks of Spirit speaking to spirit—the Holy Spirit speaking to the spirit within me and in a way incomprehensible to the mind, but plain and clear to spiritual understanding—conveying knowledge, giving intelligence, giving truth, and giving sure knowledge of the things of God. Now this applies to everyone.

“God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now;

“Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times.” (D&C 121:26–27.)

Here is another passage—a glorious one. Now this is *not* directed to the General Authorities. This is *not* directed to the Prophets of God—this is *directed to every living soul in the Church*. In other words, it is a personal revelation to you.

“For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

“And to them [the whole body of the kingdom] will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

“Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

“And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

“For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.” (D&C 76:5–10.)

Now, I said we can entertain angels, we can dream dreams, we can see visions, we can see the face of the Lord. Here is one promise in that field:

“Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am” (D&C 93:1).

The Prophet said that the veil might as well be rent today as any day, provided we come together as the elders of the kingdom in faith and in righteousness and qualify to have the visions of eternity. Here is a statement from Joseph Smith:

“Salvation cannot come without revelation [and I am not now speaking about the revelation that gave the dispensation in which we live—I am speaking of personal revelation to individuals]; it is vain for anyone to minister without it. No man is a minister of Jesus Christ without being a prophet. No man can be a minister of Jesus Christ except he has a testimony of Jesus; and this is the spirit of prophecy. Whenever salvation has been administered, it has been by testimony. Men of the present time testify of heaven and hell, and have never seen either; and I will say that no man knows these things without this.” (*Teachings*, p. 160.)

We are entitled to revelation. Personal revelation is essential to our salvation. Scriptures abound with illustrations of what has happened. Here is one of the things Nephi recorded:

“If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you” (1 Ne. 15:11).

There is a Book of Mormon statement about some tremendously successful missionaries, the sons of Mosiah:

“They were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.” (Alma 17:2–3.)

I will take space for one more quotation. This is the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas. So that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus” (*Teachings*, p. 151).

The scriptures abound in this. The Prophet and all of the prophets have said much about it. What it means to us is that we need *religious experience*, we need to become personally involved with God—our concern is not to read what somebody has said *about* religion. I have read from time to time, but primarily for amusement or diversion, what somebody has said in a critical vein about the Church or what some Protestant professor of religion has said about the tenets of Christianity. Actually what they say—their views—are not worth the snap of the fingers as far as importance is concerned. It is totally immaterial what somebody has to say about the Church in a critical vein, who is writing to evaluate from an intellectual standpoint a doctrine or a practice or a so-called program of the Church—it is just totally inconsequential as far as the Church is concerned and as its spiritually inclined people are concerned. Religion is not a matter of the intellect.

I repeat, that the better the intellect, the more we are able to evaluate spiritual principles, and it is a marvelous thing to be learned and educated and have insight and mental capacity, because we can use these talents and abilities in the spiritual realm. *But what counts in the field of religion is to become a personal participant in it.* Instead of reading all that has been written and evaluating all that all the scholars of all the world have said about heaven and hell, we need to do what the Prophet said: gaze five minutes into heaven. As a consequence, we would know more than all that has ever been evaluated and written and analyzed on the subject.

Religion is a matter of getting the Holy Ghost into the life on an individual basis. We study, of course, and we need to evaluate. And by virtue of our study we come up with some foundations that get us into the frame of mind so that we *can* seek the things of the Spirit. But in the end the result is *getting our souls touched by the Spirit of God.*

Would you like a formula to tell how to get personal revelation? It might be written in many ways. My formula is simply this:

1. Search the scriptures.
2. Keep the commandments.
3. Ask in faith.

Any person who will do this will get his heart so in tune with the Infinite that there will come into his being, from the “still small voice,” the eternal realities of religion. And as he progresses and advances and comes nearer to God, there will be a day when he will entertain angels, when he will see visions, and the final end is to view the face of God.

Religion is a thing of the spirit. Use all your intellectuality to help you, but in the final analysis, you have to get in tune with the Lord.

The first great revelation that a person needs to get is *to know of the divinity of the work.* We call that a testimony. When a person gets a testimony, he has thereby learned how to get in tune with the Spirit and get revelation. So, repeating the connection—getting in tune anew—he can get knowledge to direct him in his personal affairs. Then ultimately enjoying and progressing in this gift, he can get all revelations of eternity that the Prophet or all the prophets have had in all the ages.

To some extent I, along with you, have received revelation. I have received revelation that tells me that this work is true. And as a consequence, I *know* it. And I know it independent of any study and any research, and I know it because the Holy Spirit has spoken to the spirit that is within me and given me a testimony. As a consequence, I can stand as a legal administrator and say in verity that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that Joseph Smith is his prophet, that Spencer W. Kimball wears the prophetic mantle today, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth.

And further, in connection with the matter we are here considering, I can certify and testify that *every living soul who will abide the law*, search the scriptures, keep the commandments, and ask in faith, *can have personal revelation from the Almighty* to the great glory and satisfaction of his soul here and to his ultimate salvation in the mansions on high.

GOSPEL TEACHING

ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

In Conference Report, October 1999, 100–104; or Ensign, November 1999, 78–80



THE INFLUENCE OF A TEACHER

A national author wrote a book about his greatest teacher. At the heart of this college teacher's powerful impact on his student was the student's conviction that this teacher really cared for him and wanted him to learn and do what would help him find happiness. The author concluded his tribute with this question: "Have you ever really had a teacher? One who saw you as a raw but precious thing, a jewel that, with wisdom, could be polished to a proud shine? If you are lucky enough to find your way to such teachers, you will always find your way back."¹ . . .

There are many different ways to teach, but all good teaching is based on certain fundamental principles. Without pretending to be exhaustive, I wish to identify and comment on six fundamental principles of gospel teaching.

LOVE GOD AND THOSE YOU TEACH

The *first* is love. It has two manifestations. 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. We are taught that we should pray "with all the energy of heart . . . [to] be filled with this love" (Moroni 7:48). 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.

FOCUS ON THE STUDENTS' NEEDS

Second, a gospel teacher, like the Master we serve, will concentrate entirely on those being taught. His or her total concentration will be on the needs of the sheep—the good of the students. A gospel teacher does not focus on himself or herself. One who understands that principle will not look upon his or her calling as "giving or presenting a lesson," because that definition views teaching from the standpoint of the teacher, not the student.

Focusing on the needs of the students, a gospel teacher will never obscure their view of the Master by standing in the way or by shadowing the lesson with self-promotion or self-interest. This means that a gospel teacher must

never indulge in priestcrafts, which are "that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world" (2 Nephi 26:29). A gospel teacher does not preach "to become popular" (Alma 1:3) or "for the sake of riches and honor" (Alma 1:16). He or she follows the marvelous Book of Mormon example in which "the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner" (Alma 1:26). Both will always look to the Master.

TEACH FROM APPROVED GOSPEL MATERIALS

Third, 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. This is commanded in modern revelation, where the Lord said:

"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.

"And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit" (D&C 42:12–13).

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. For example, they would not teach any rules for determining what is a full tithing, and they would not provide a list of *do's* and *don'ts* for keeping the Sabbath day holy. 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.

Well-taught doctrines and principles have a more powerful influence on behavior than rules. When we teach gospel doctrine and principles, we can qualify for the witness and guidance of the Spirit to reinforce our teaching, and we enlist the faith of our students in seeking the guidance of that same Spirit in applying those teachings in their personal lives. . . .

As I have visited in quorums and Relief Societies, I have generally been pleased and impressed at how these *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* are being presented and received. However, I have sometimes observed teachers who gave the designated chapter no more than a casual mention and then presented a lesson and invited discussion on other materials of the teacher's choice. That is not acceptable. A gospel teacher is not called to choose the subject of the lesson but to teach and discuss what has been specified. Gospel teachers should also be scrupulous to avoid hobby topics, personal speculations, and controversial subjects. The Lord's revelations and the

directions of His servants are clear on this point. We should all be mindful of President Spencer W. Kimball's great instruction that a gospel teacher is a "guest":

"He has been given an authoritative position and a stamp of approval is placed upon him, and those whom he teaches are justified in assuming that, having been chosen and sustained in the proper order, he represents the Church and the things which he teaches are approved by the Church. No matter how brilliant he may be and how many new truths he may think he has found, he has no right to go beyond the program of the Church."⁶

EFFECTIVELY PREPARE AND PRESENT LESSONS

Fourth, a gospel teacher will prepare diligently and strive to use the most effective means of presenting the prescribed lessons. . . .

TEACH BY THE SPIRIT

The *fifth* fundamental principle of gospel teaching I wish to stress is the Lord's command, quoted earlier, that gospel teachers should "teach the principles of my gospel . . . as they shall be directed by the Spirit. . . . And if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:12–14). It is a gospel teacher's privilege and duty to seek that level of discipleship where his or her teachings will be directed and endorsed by the Spirit rather than being rigidly selected and prearranged for personal convenience or qualifications. The marvelous principles of "Gospel Teaching and Leadership" in the new *Church Handbook of Instructions* include the following:

"Teachers and class members should seek the Spirit during the lesson. A person may teach profound truths, and class members may engage in stimulating discussions, but unless the Spirit is present, these things will not be powerfully impressed upon the soul. . . .

"When the Spirit is present in gospel teaching, 'the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth [the message] unto the hearts of the children of men' (2 Nephi 33:1)."⁷

President Hinckley stated an important corollary to the command to teach by the Spirit when he issued this challenge:

"We must . . . get our teachers to speak out of their hearts rather than out of their books, to communicate their love

for the Lord and this precious work, and somehow it will catch fire in the hearts of those they teach."⁸

That is our objective—to have love of God and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ "catch fire" in the hearts of those we teach.

TEACH TO HELP OTHERS

That leads to the *sixth* and final principle I will discuss. A gospel teacher is concerned with the results of his or her teaching, and such a teacher will measure the success of teaching and testifying by its impact on the lives of the learners.⁹ 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.

President Harold B. Lee said: "The calling of the gospel teacher is one of the noblest in the world. The good teacher can make all the difference in inspiring boys and girls and men and women to change their lives and fulfill their highest destiny. The importance of the teacher has been beautifully described by Daniel Webster when he said, 'If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue them with principles and the just fear of God and love of our fellowman, we engrave upon those tablets something that will brighten through all eternity.'"¹⁰

I testify that this is God's work, and that we are His servants with the sacred responsibility of teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the greatest message of all time. We need more teachers to match that message. I pray that we will all become superior gospel teachers, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie* (1997), 192. . . .
6. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 533.
7. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 300.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 619–20.
9. See Henry B. Eyring, in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 94–95; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 73.
10. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 461.

READING THE SCRIPTURES

ELDER HOWARD W. HUNTER OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

In Conference Report, October 1979, 91–93; or Ensign, November 1979, 64–65

When we follow the counsel of our leaders to read and study the scriptures, benefits and blessings of many kinds come to us. This is the most profitable of all study in which we could engage. The portion of scripture known as the Old and New Testaments is often referred to as the great literature of the world. These books have been regarded as scientific treatises, as philosophic dissertations, and also as historical records; but if we understand the true purpose of these and other scriptures, we realize that they are really the fundamental literature of religion.



SCRIPTURAL LIBRARY

The scriptural library contains the basic declarations concerning God and his children and the interrelationship between them. Throughout each of the books there is an appeal to believe and have faith in God the Eternal Father and in his son, Jesus Christ; and from the first to the last of these books of scripture is the call to do the will of God and keep his commandments.

Scriptures contain the record of the self-revelation of God, and through them God speaks to man. Where could there be more profitable use of time than reading from the scriptural library the literature that teaches us to know God and understand our relationship to him? Time is always precious to busy people, and we are robbed of its worth when hours are wasted in reading or viewing that which is frivolous and of little value.

Reading habits vary widely. There are rapid readers and slow readers, some who read only small snatches at a time and others who persist without stopping until the book is finished. Those who delve into the scriptural library, however, find that to understand requires more than casual reading or perusal—there must be concentrated study. 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. Not only should we study each day, but there should be a regular time set aside when we can concentrate without interference.

PRAYER

There is nothing more helpful than prayer to open our understanding of the scriptures. Through prayer we can attune our minds to seek the answers to our searchings. The Lord said: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke 11:9). Herein is Christ’s reassurance that if we will ask, seek, and knock, the Holy Spirit will guide our understanding if we are ready and eager to receive.

SYSTEMATIC STUDY PLAN

Many find that the best time to study is in the morning after a night’s rest has cleared the mind of the many cares that interrupt thought. Others prefer to study in the quiet hours after the work and worries of the day are over and brushed aside, thus ending the day with a peace and tranquillity that comes by communion with the scriptures.

Perhaps what is more important than the hour of the day is that a regular time be set aside for study. It would be ideal if an hour could be spent each day; but if that much cannot be had, a half hour on a regular basis would result in substantial accomplishment. A quarter of an hour is little time, but it is surprising how much enlightenment and knowledge can be acquired in a subject so meaningful. The important thing is to allow nothing else to ever interfere with our study.

Some prefer to study alone, but companions can study together profitably. Families are greatly blessed when wise fathers and mothers bring their children about them, read from the pages of the scriptural library together, and then discuss freely the beautiful stories and thoughts according to the understanding of all. Often youth and little ones have amazing insight into and appreciation for the basic literature of religion.

We should not be haphazard in our reading but rather develop a systematic plan for study. There are some who read to a schedule of a number of pages or a set number of chapters each day or week. This may be perfectly justifiable and may be enjoyable if one is reading for pleasure, but it does not constitute meaningful study. It is better to have a set amount of time to give scriptural study each day than to have a set amount of chapters to read. Sometimes we find that the study of a single verse will occupy the whole time.

CONTEMPLATION

The life, acts, and teachings of Jesus can be read rapidly. The stories are simple in most instances and the stories are simply told. The Master used few words in his teachings, but each one is so concise in meaning that

together they portray a clear image to the reader. Sometimes, however, many hours might be spent in contemplation of profound thoughts expressed in a few simple words.

There was an incident in the life of the Savior that was mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. A significant part of the story is told by Mark in only two short verses and five words of the following verse. Let me read them to you.

STORY OF JAIRUS

“And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him [that is, when he saw Jesus], he fell at his feet,

“And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

“And Jesus went with him” (Mark 5:22–24).

The reading time of that portion of the story is about thirty seconds. It is short and uncomplicated. The visual picture is clear and even a child could repeat it without difficulty. But as we spend time in thought and contemplation, a great depth of understanding and meaning comes to us. We conclude that this is more than a simple story about a little girl who was sick and Jesus went to lay his hands on her. Let me read these words to you again:

“And, behold.” The word *behold* is used frequently in scripture with a wide variety of meanings. Its use in this instance designates suddenness or unexpectedness. Jesus and those who were with him had just recrossed the Sea of Galilee, and a multitude of people who had been waiting met him on the shore near Capernaum. “And, behold [suddenly and unexpectedly], there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue.” The larger synagogues of that day were presided over by a college of elders under the direction of a chief or a ruler. This was a man of rank and prestige whom the Jews looked upon with great respect.

Matthew doesn’t give the name of this chief elder, but Mark identifies him by adding to his title the words, “Jairus by name.” Nowhere else in the scriptures does this man or his name appear except on this occasion, yet his memory lives in history because of a brief contact with Jesus. Many, many lives have become memorable that otherwise would have been lost in obscurity had it not been for the touch of the Master’s hand that made a significant change of thought and action and a new and better life.

“And when he saw him [that is, when Jairus saw Jesus], he fell at his feet.”

This was an unusual circumstance for a man of rank and prestige, a ruler of the synagogue, to kneel at Jesus’

feet—at the feet of one considered to be an itinerant teacher with the gift of healing. Many others of learning and prestige saw Jesus also but ignored him. Their minds were closed. Today is no different; obstacles stand in the way of many to accept him.

“And [Jairus] besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death.” This is typical of what happens frequently when a man comes to Christ, not so much for his own need, but because of the desperate need of a loved one. The tremor we hear in Jairus’s voice as he speaks of “My little daughter” stirs our souls with sympathy as we think of this man of high position in the synagogue on his knees before the Savior.

Then comes a great acknowledgement of faith: “I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.” These are not only the words of faith of a father torn with grief but are also a reminder to us that whatever Jesus lays his hands upon lives. If Jesus lays his hands upon a marriage, it lives. If he is allowed to lay his hands on the family, it lives.

The words, “and Jesus went with him” follow. We would not suppose that this event had been within the plans for the day. The Master had come back across the sea where the multitude was waiting on the shore for him to teach them. “And behold”—suddenly and unexpectedly—he was interrupted by the plea of a father. He could have ignored the request because many others were waiting. He could have said to Jairus that he would come to see his daughter tomorrow, but “Jesus went with him.” If we follow in the footsteps of the Master, would we ever be too busy to ignore the needs of our fellowmen?

It is not necessary to read the remainder of the story. When they got to the home of the ruler of the synagogue, Jesus took the little girl by the hand and raised her from the dead. In like manner, he will lift and raise every man to a new and better life who will permit the Savior to take him by the hand.

SCRIPTURES GIVE GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

I am grateful for the library of scripture through which a greater knowledge of Jesus Christ can be learned by devoted study. I am grateful that in addition to the Old and New Testaments, the Lord, through prophets of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has added other revealed scripture as additional witnesses for Christ—the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—all of which I know to be the word of God. These bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

May the Lord bless us in our study and righteous quest to seek him, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

HELPING OTHERS TO BE SPIRITUALLY LED

ELDER RICHARD G. SCOTT
OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from an address to religious educators at a symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history, Brigham Young University, 11 August 1998, 1–5, 8, 10–12



Were I a teacher of young students, I would have them commit to apply this principle: I will seek to learn by what I hear, see, and feel. I will write down the things I learn and will do them.

You would want to explain how to use each of these three avenues of communication. Every student who consistently does that will be blessed by inspired direction in life. . . .

I will suggest some ways for you to help students qualify to be led by the Spirit and recognize when that direction comes, to record and obey it.

Those you teach live in a world subject to challenges and temptations. I am convinced that without the help of the Spirit an individual will have difficulty avoiding transgression in the world of today. Should the wrong choices be made, that person becomes bound by sin. . . .

As you teach the appropriate doctrine and help explain the processes by which the Lord communicates through the Spirit, your students will *experience* being spiritually led. They will learn the principles upon which such communication is based. As they apply those principles, they will make the correct choices in life.

All too often in the world, a teacher's relation to a student is one of giving counsel with little or no interaction. Often there is no explanation of the reasons why there are commandments, rules, and standards. Most of the teaching in the world is based on one of the five senses—hear, see, touch, smell, or taste.

In your classroom, you can teach by the power of the Spirit. You have the opportunity to encourage continual participation of your students in the discussion to bring into their lives the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Your capacity to do this is enhanced by the direction you receive from the Holy Spirit.

If you accomplish nothing else in your relationship with your students than to help them recognize and follow the promptings of the Spirit, you will bless their lives

immeasurably and eternally. You have learned that to do this you must constantly seek the guidance of the Spirit to know what to say and how to say it.

Those of you who are beginning service as an instrument of the Lord in teaching and testifying to the precious youth of the Church will learn an important lesson that the more experienced have long since confirmed. There is no place in your teaching for gimmicks, fads, or bribery by favors or treats. Such activities produce no lasting motivation for personal growth nor any enduring beneficial results. Simply stated, truths presented in an environment of true love and trust qualify for the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit.

When you encourage students to raise their hand to respond to a question, they signify to the Holy Spirit their willingness to learn. That use of moral agency will allow the Spirit to motivate and give them more powerful guidance during your time together. Participation allows individuals to *experience* being led by the Spirit. They learn to recognize and feel what spiritual guidance is. It is through the repeated process of feeling impressions, recording them, and obeying them that one learns to depend on the direction of the Spirit more than on communication through the five senses.

I would now like to lay a doctrinal foundation for what we will share together. You may find some of this helpful to use with your students.

The Savior said, "I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the Holy Ghost" (D&C 8:2; italics added).

I would explain to the students that an impression to the *mind* is very specific.

Detailed words can be heard or felt and written as though the instruction were being dictated.

A communication to the *heart* is a more general impression. The Lord often begins by giving impressions. Where there is a recognition of their importance and they are obeyed, one gains more capacity to receive more detailed instruction to the *mind*. An impression to the heart, if followed, is fortified by a more specific instruction to the mind. . . .

. . . Let's discuss different ways of learning from the scriptures.

One way is to read, ponder, and pray about the meaning of specific verses. Another is to analyze and unite related scriptures. Then on a separate sheet of paper, prepare a statement of principle that embodies the truths contained in those scriptures. When these two things are carefully and consistently done, then you can be instructed through inspiration as you search the scriptures. . . .

From the scriptures themselves we will draw nuggets of truth and record them on a separate sheet as a statement of principle.

Let us begin the statement of principle by writing *In order to qualify to be led more powerfully by the Spirit, I must:*

Now we'll go to specific scriptures and identify what we will write under that heading. We will use the experience of Enos. I will read several scriptures from that marvelous instructive chapter and end by identifying two key gems of instruction he received that help us learn truth from the Holy Spirit.

"I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3).

He was experiencing a general impression to his heart and wisely he responded powerfully and immediately.

"My soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens" (Enos 1:4).

We don't know exactly what happened, but it is not likely that he was on his knees praying all that time. You've had the experience of when something urgent is needed to be resolved, you pray, you ponder, you pray more, you formulate commitments and decisions, you present them to the Lord, you pray more and get feelings of guidance from Him. The guidance to Enos was very direct because of the need and his wisdom in responding immediately to a prompting of the Spirit.

"There came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

"And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

"And I said: Lord, how is it done?"

Now comes a gem of instruction:

"He said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ. . . .

"Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren."

Another heart-centered impression from the Lord, and Enos immediately responded:

"Wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them.

"And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, . . . the voice of the Lord came into my *mind* again, saying:"

Now the Lord gives another gem of truth:

"I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments" (Enos 1:5–10; italics added).

We have identified two truths regarding spiritual communication that the Lord gave Enos: "because of thy faith in Christ" and "I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments." Let us now write these truths as part of our statement of principle. . . .

Is the pattern that we are following becoming clearer? This same approach could be used to teach any doctrine, such as the Atonement of the Savior. Effort to study the scriptures and unite common concepts from like scriptures will qualify one to receive further inspiration and guidance through pondering the scriptures. . . .

Some years ago I had an assignment in Mexico and Central America similar to that of an Area President. I noticed how false traditions often bound even the members of the Church to be led to do the wrong things. For a long time I prayed for guidance from the Lord in how to help those people I love so much recognize false traditions without my being misunderstood as one who did not appreciate their culture.

One Sunday, I attended services in the building where our family ward met together with a Spanish branch. I visited the branch priesthood meeting where a humble, unschooled Mexican priesthood leader struggled to communicate truths of the gospel. It was obvious how deeply they had touched his life. I noted his intense desire to communicate those principles. He recognized they were of great worth to the brethren he loved. He read from the lesson manual, yet his manner was of pure love of the Savior and those he taught. That love, sincerity, and purity of intent allowed the influence of the Holy Ghost to envelop the room.

The Lord chose that moment to answer my pleadings. I began to receive distinct direction regarding how to help the leaders and members overcome false traditions. There were other impressions intended for me personally. As each impression came, I faithfully recorded it. I was given precious truths that were greatly needed to be a more effective servant of the Lord.

While the details of the communication are sacred, like a patriarchal blessing—for the benefit of the recipient—I will share some of the insight gained and the unfolding of other truths that occurred that day. It is an example of the inspired direction from the Lord through the Holy Ghost that anyone can receive when the doctrines we have discussed are conscientiously applied.

The specific counsel began with this statement: "You are to continue to build the Church on a foundation of true principles, but with increased expression of love and appreciation you have been blessed to understand and feel for the great Lamanite people." There followed

specific directions, instructions, and conditioned promises that have altered the course of my life.

Subsequently, I visited the Sunday School class in the ward where my family attended. A well-educated university professor presented the lesson. That experience was in striking contrast to the one enjoyed in the branch priesthood meeting. It seemed to me that the instructor had purposely chosen obscure references and unusual examples to develop his assigned topic—the life of Joseph Smith. I had the distinct impression that he used the teaching opportunity to impress the class with his great knowledge. At any rate, he did not seem as intent on communicating principles as had the humble priesthood leader.

This experience also created an environment where strong impressions came to me again. I began to write the instructions given directly to my mind. Some of the paragraphs begin with phrases such as these: “Teach and testify to instruct, edify, and lead others to full obedience, not to demonstrate anything of self. All who are puffed up shall be cut off.”

Another entry reads, “You are nothing in and of yourself, Richard.” That was followed by some specific counsel on how to become more effective as an instrument of the Lord. Then later a section begins, “Through qualification by obedience, self-restraint, and the power of faith.” That phrase is followed by further promises conditioned upon those requisites.

In this experience there came such an outpouring of personal impressions that I felt inappropriate to record in the midst of a Sunday School class. In a more private location I continued to write the feelings that flooded into my mind, as accurately as possible. After each powerful impression was recorded, I pondered it, seeking to confirm that I had accurately expressed the feelings I had received. I then prayed, expressing to the Lord what I thought I had been taught by the Spirit. Feelings of peace confirmed the appropriateness of what I had recorded. I was impressed to ask if there were more I should receive. There came further impressions and the process was repeated until I received some of the most precious, specific direction that anyone could ever hope to obtain in this life.

This is not an isolated experience. I know that sincere, righteous individuals who follow the principles we have discussed will enjoy such direction from the Lord. Please help your students to understand these principles and to receive confirmation from your own testimony of the reality of spiritual direction that will encourage them to seek such guidance. Prayerfully help them understand that such guidance is as real as are the five physical senses. I encourage you to emphasize that we often leave the most precious personal direction of the Spirit unheard because we do not record and respond to the first promptings that

come to us when the Lord chooses to direct us or when impressions come in response to urgent prayer.

This sacred experience illustrates the meaning of that familiar instruction from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“He that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth[.]

“. . . He that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are *edified and rejoice together*” (D&C 50:21–22; italics added).

To me, the word *edified* means that the Lord will personalize our understanding of truth to meet our individual needs and as we strive for that guidance. In the branch priesthood meeting, I *understood* the principles that were taught by a Spirit-directed instructor. I had a witness of their truthfulness. But in addition to that, I was *edified*. The message taught was powerfully expanded for my personal benefit by sacred impressions communicated through the Holy Ghost. The humility of the Mexican priesthood leader was requisite to his being used as an instrument for spiritual communication of truth.

Humility is that quality that permits us to be taught from on high through the Spirit or to be taught from sources whose origin was inspiration from the Lord, such as the scriptures and the comments of the prophets. Humility is the precious, fertile soil of righteous character. In it the seeds of personal growth germinate. When cultivated through the exercise of faith, pruned by repentance, and fortified by obedience and good works, such seeds produce the cherished fruit of spiritual direction.

The importance of humility is illustrated by verse 28 of section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants: “And inasmuch as they were *humble* they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time” (italics added).

Teach your students that one cannot “call down” the Spirit as some are prone to say. We can create an appropriate environment for the Holy Ghost to instruct us. Spiritual communication cannot be forced. We must qualify ourselves and be ready to receive the Lord’s guidance and direction when He determines to provide it. No matter how urgent our personal timetable, the Lord responds according to His own will.

As you emphasize the need for obedience to the commandments of God in order to be spiritually directed, the youth will understand why Satan tempts them to disobey the commandments. Even matters that are considered relatively small deviations will seriously affect their capacity to be led by the Spirit. Your extended explanations and examples will help them confirm in their minds a determination to be righteous in order to qualify to be led by the Lord through the Spirit in the important decisions they must make in life.

THE ORDINARY CLASSROOM—A POWERFUL PLACE FOR STEADY AND CONTINUED GROWTH

SISTER VIRGINIA H. PEARCE

FIRST COUNSELOR IN THE YOUNG WOMEN GENERAL PRESIDENCY

In Conference Report, October 1996, 12–15; or Ensign, November 1996, 11–14



HOPING WE WILL BE ACTIVE AND FAITHFUL

Several months ago my husband performed the baptism of a dear friend. As I sat in the service, my mind and heart raced over her years of preparation for that single event—the principles carefully taught, constantly observed, and quietly accepted, the acknowledgment of God’s hand in life events, the sweet confirmation of the Spirit as difficult but right choices were made. My mind recalled the past and rejoiced in the present, and I couldn’t help but anticipate the future. I hoped with all my heart that this good woman would remain actively connected to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the rest of her life—that she would continue to learn and live the gospel and experience the fulness of its blessings.

This morning, as I remember those hopes, I think about the 375,469¹ others who were baptized last year. And then I think of the rest of us, the roughly nine million who have stepped into the waters of baptism sometime in the past. Though our stories are individual, each of us came to that ordinance having been taught the true doctrines of the kingdom, having felt the Spirit, having understood how the doctrines fit into the context of our lives, and having demonstrated a willingness to try always to live those truths.

It seems too hard to think about the possibility, even the probability, that not all of us will continue to “cling to the Church and live its principles.”² Many of us will leave and never return to this happy fellowship. Some of us will leave for a time and find our way back with a heightened sense of gratitude for participation in the kingdom of God on earth. The reality of life is that each of us is daily at risk for drifting or even marching into inactivity.

CHURCH CLASSES FOSTER GROWTH

There are so many things in place to help us remain active. This morning I would like to talk about just one of them. I would like to suggest that the ordinary Church classroom is a powerful setting for steady and continued growth in the gospel.

Sunday School, priesthood, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, seminary, and institute classes may be held in dedicated buildings, under a tree, or in a home. But each class is part of a plan for lifelong gospel learning. We can have great expectations for the power of those learning hours! Church classes provide a place where we can repeatedly experience the very things that brought us into the waters of baptism, where we learn doctrine and receive the ratifying witness of its truth, where we come to understand how doctrine is applied in the reality of our daily lives and accept the challenge to change our behavior accordingly.

TEACH, UNDERSTAND, AND APPLY DOCTRINE

The fundamental curriculum for all classes in the Church is the scriptures³—they contain the unchanging doctrines of the kingdom of God. These truths are what brought us into the Church. If we fail to continue learning them, we may not stay. “You shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom . . . that ye may be prepared in all things.”⁴

Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.”⁵ How do we know which doctrine to teach each week? It is stated in the lesson objective. But how do we come to *understand* the doctrine in a way that it will change our attitudes and behavior?

In order to really understand, we have to see the way doctrine is applied. In the lesson manuals, the suggested stories, examples, activities, and games are intended to help the learners understand doctrine in real-life settings.

Because the daily life of people varies so much in the 160 different countries where we have organized classes, the stories and examples in the manuals may sometimes confuse the learners. Teachers can prayerfully make adaptations, always taking care that the learning activities chosen truly reflect the doctrine.

A teacher’s goal is greater than just delivering a lecture about truth. It is to invite the Spirit and use techniques which will enhance the possibility that the learner will discover the truth for herself and then be motivated to apply it.

LEARN AND ENHANCE TEACHING SKILLS

Although some seem to be born teachers, teaching skills can successfully be learned. Where can you go as a teacher to enhance your skills? Could you watch and learn from others? Perhaps approach an admired teacher, asking him to observe and offer suggestions? What about your Primary presidency, if you are a Primary teacher, or your Sunday School presidency, if you teach Sunday School? Asking your ward teacher development coordinator for regular and

specific help would put you in touch with a multitude of resources.⁶ We don't have to struggle alone in this Church. There is help everywhere. We can prayerfully and courageously seek to learn and practice new techniques.

CHURCH CLASSES AFFECT CHURCH ACTIVITY

I had a conversation once with a young man I cannot forget. His story of activity, complete inactivity, and a return to activity included the description of two classrooms. He said: "When I was about 15, I started to have a lot of questions about the Church. I thought maybe there would be a chance to talk about my questions at church, but it didn't happen. In priesthood it seemed like most of the time everybody talked about the game the night before. Sunday School was about the same—maybe a little lesson thrown in during the last five minutes where the teacher asked questions, and it was kind of 'guess-the-right-answer-from-the-manual-time.'"

Well, other things happened—late Saturday nights, a switch to an earlier meeting schedule—and soon the young man's attendance dropped to nothing. Several years passed by until he found himself in church again. This time his face lit up as he described his Sunday School class:

"The teacher was this unimpressive-looking guy, but he was so excited about what he was teaching. He didn't waste a minute. He asked important questions. Everyone had their scriptures. They looked up verses, shared ideas. They listened to each other. They talked about problems at school and how they fit in with the lesson. You could tell that the people in the class were all different, but they had one amazing thing in common—they were all interested in learning the gospel. After five minutes, I knew that this was a good place for me."

HOW TO HELP CLASS MEMBERS LEARN

What a difference in those experiences! Can you imagine hundreds of thousands of classrooms every Sunday, each with a teacher who understands that "the learning has to be done by the pupil. Therefore it is the pupil who has to be put into action. When a teacher takes the spotlight, becomes the star of the show, does all the talking, and otherwise takes over all of the activity, it is almost certain that he is interfering with the learning of the class members."⁷

A skilled teacher doesn't think, "What shall I do in class today?" but asks, "What will my students do in class today?"; not, "What will I teach today?" but rather, "How will I help my students discover what they need to know?"⁸ The skilled teacher does not want students who leave the class talking about how magnificent and unusual the teacher is. This teacher wants students who leave talking about how magnificent the gospel is!

CREATE TRUST AND SAFETY IN CLASS

Learning occurs best in an atmosphere of trust and safety. This means that each person's questions and contributions are respected. When we feel safe and included, we can ask questions that will help us to understand the gospel. We can share insights and faith that might help someone else.⁹ We can stumble without embarrassment as we try to apply the lessons taught. Conversely, when we feel that we must protect and defend ourselves or seem more righteous than we are, our energy is used counterproductively and our learning and the learning of others is severely limited. Maintaining a climate of trust and safety is a responsibility the teacher and the learners share.

THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END OF CLASS

I have heard Sister Janette Beckham, Young Women general president, talk simply about teaching a class. She says:

"It is the teacher's responsibility to introduce the lesson and help lay the groundwork. The middle part belongs to the students where they participate and work toward understanding and application. Then the teacher must watch the time, because she owns the last few minutes of class. She has a responsibility to clarify and summarize the doctrine taught so that learners will not leave confused about the message. Then she can bear personal testimony of the principle under discussion."¹⁰

A SUCCESSFUL YOUNG WOMEN CLASS

In conclusion, will you come with me into a classroom of 12- and 13-year-old young women. Listen as you hear the learners discover doctrine. Notice the experience the teacher provides for the learners so that they can connect the doctrine to the reality of their lives. Feel the accompanying witness of the Spirit:

Our teacher moves her chair closer into the semicircle of five girls. "We have a guest waiting outside," she begins. "It is Sister Jonas. She has agreed to show us her tiny baby and tell us how she feels about being a new mother. As you watch this new little baby, would you also notice his mother—how she treats the baby, what she does, what she says. We'll talk about her visit after she leaves."

Sister Jonas comes in, spends seven or eight minutes talking about her baby and answering questions. The girls thank her, and she leaves the classroom.

"The baby was darling, wasn't he?" our teacher responds to the delighted hum of the class. "But what did you notice about the mother?"

A minute of silence and then a response: "Well, she was happy." Another: "She kind of rocked back and forth the whole time she was holding him." A few more responses,

and then Katie slowly begins, “She—ummm—she talked really quietly.”

“Could you say more about that?” the teacher coaxes.

“Well, her voice reminds me of my mother’s voice when she called from the hospital to tell us we had a new baby sister last year.”

The teacher, turning to the other girls: “What do you think? Did anyone else notice her voice?”

The girls become more thoughtful and begin to reply with words like “reverence,” “heaven,” “love.”

The teacher: “I think I understand. I believe those words come to our minds because we are recognizing a great gift from our Heavenly Father. He loves us and trusts us so much that He is willing to share His creative powers with us. We feel such gratitude and reverence for this trust. Motherhood is a *divine* role.”

After this clear statement of doctrine and testimony, our teacher moves on to an activity where the girls identify qualities their own mothers exhibit that show an understanding of the divinity of motherhood. “Could each of you prepare for motherhood right now by practicing one of these very virtues—maybe being more patient, kinder, or more positive this week?”

Each girl talks about her choice. Our teacher bears personal testimony. The closing prayer is offered.

A simple class. No sensational stories. No scholarly class members—just ones who come prepared to participate. No extraordinarily gifted teacher—just one who prayerfully prepares and uses techniques that allow her to help class members understand and apply true doctrine.

STRENGTHEN EACH OTHER THROUGH CLASSES

I telephoned our newly baptized friend last week to ask how things were going for her. Her response was enthusiastic: “My husband and I have been called to teach the 15- and 16-year-olds, and I’m learning so

much!” I felt reassured and excited. What better place than a classroom—for her and for each of us!

President Hinckley encourages us: “We are all in it together, all of us, and we have a great work to do. Every teacher can be a better teacher than he or she is today.”¹¹ I would add: Every learner can be a better learner than he or she is today. And every classroom can be a better classroom.

I pray that we will continue to hold on to one another through effective classroom learning. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 28; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 21.
2. “Cling to the Church and live its principles and I do not hesitate to promise you that your lives will be happy, that your accomplishments will be significant, and that you will have reason to get on your knees and thank the Lord for all He has done for you in giving to you the marvelous and wonderful opportunities that you have” (Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Church News*, 3 Aug. 1996, 2).
3. See *Instructions for Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders on Curriculum* (1994), 1.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:77, 80.
5. “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” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).
6. See *Teaching—No Greater Call* (1978); *Instructions for Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders on Teacher Development* (1993); *Teach One Another* (videocassette, 1990).
7. *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders* (1994), 14.
8. *Teaching the Gospel*, 13.
9. See Romans 1:11–12.
10. Unpublished talk.
11. “We are all in it together, all of us, and we have a great work to do. Every teacher can be a better teacher than he or she is today. Every officer can be a better officer than he or she is today. Every father can be a better father, every mother can be a better mother, every husband can be a better husband, every wife a better wife, every child a better child. We are on the road that leads to immortality and eternal life and today is a part of it. Let us never forget it” (Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Church News*, 4 Nov. 1995, 2).

Additional references: 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Jacob 1:19; Alma 1:26; 29:8; Doctrine and Covenants 42:12; 43:8; 50:22; 88:122.

EDUCATION OF YOUTH

**PRESIDENT DAVID O.
MCKAY**

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

*Excerpt from Pathways to
Happiness, comp. Llewelyn R.
McKay (1957), 61*

The great influencing factor in the class room is the teacher, his personality, what he thinks, not just what he says, but what he is, really and truly in his heart—this is what influences his students.



CLEANSING THE INNER VESSEL

**PRESIDENT EZRA TAFT
BENSON**

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

*In Conference Report, April
1986, 3–6; or Ensign, May
1986, 4–6*

My beloved brethren and sisters, as we commence another general conference of the Church, I earnestly seek an interest in your faith and prayers that what I say may bless and edify our souls. I realize my dependence upon the Lord, and I also know that Jesus Christ is the head of this church and that through Him we can do all things that are needful.

DEDICATION, DEVOTION, AND SERVICE

I commend those of you who are present here this morning, as well as you who are listening or watching these proceedings and those who will later take the opportunity to hear or read the messages of this conference.

Our hearts are filled with overwhelming gratitude to you for all you do to contribute to the building of the kingdom of God on earth. Surely the Lord is pleased with the consecrated time, love, and generous support of so many of His Saints throughout the world.

Your dedication, devotion, and service are indications that faith has indeed increased in the earth. Seldom have the efforts of so few resulted in the blessing of so many!



WATCHMEN—WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

As I have sought direction from the Lord, I have had reaffirmed in my mind and heart the declaration of the Lord to “say nothing but repentance unto this generation” (D&C 6:9; 11:9). This has been a theme of every latter-day prophet, along with their testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

Repentance was the cry of our late and great prophet, Spencer W. Kimball. This theme permeated his talks and the pages of his writings, such as his marvelous book *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. And it must be our cry today, both to member and to nonmember alike—repent.

Watchmen—what of the night? We must respond by saying that all is not well in Zion. As Moroni counseled, we must cleanse the inner vessel (see Alma 60:23), beginning first with ourselves, then with our families, and finally with the Church.

CHANGED PEOPLE!

A prophet of God stated, “Ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow . . . until the good shall overcome the bad” (Jacob 5:66). It takes a Zion people to make a Zion society, and we must prepare for that.

During the past few years a number of resources have been set in place in the Church to help us. New editions of the scriptures have been published—are we taking advantage of them? More temples are located closer to our people—are we going to the house of the Lord more frequently? The consolidated meeting schedule was set up—are we taking advantage of the increased time with our families? A special home evening manual was provided—are we using it? A new hymnal has just been published—are we singing more songs of the heart? (See

D&C 25:12.) And so the list goes on and on. We have received much help. We don't need changed programs now as much as we need changed people!

We remember our beloved President Kimball for many marvelous words of counsel, among which was his encouragement to "lengthen our stride." We needed that direction, for the Book of Mormon warns us of the tactics of the adversary in the last days: "And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21).

There are many "awake" passages in the Book of Mormon, such as: "O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell . . . awake . . . [and] put on the armor of righteousness. Shake off the chains with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity, and arise from the dust" (2 Nephi 1:13, 23). As a people, it seems we can survive persecution easier and better than we can peace and prosperity.

SEXUAL IMMORALITY

The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality. This, the Prophet Joseph said, would be the source of more temptations, more buffetings, and more difficulties for the elders of Israel than any other. (See *Journal of Discourses*, 8:55.)

President Joseph F. Smith said that sexual impurity would be one of the three dangers that would threaten the Church within—and so it does. (See *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 312–13.) It permeates our society.

In the category of sins, the Book of Mormon places unchastity next to murder. (See Alma 39:5.) As Alma states, "Now . . . I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins, and go no more after the lusts of your eyes, . . . for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (Alma 39:9). If we are to cleanse the inner vessel, we must forsake immorality and be clean.

DO MORE WITH THE BOOK OF MORMON

Unless we read the Book of Mormon and give heed to its teachings, the Lord has stated in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the whole Church is under condemnation: "And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all" (D&C 84:56). The Lord continues: "And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written" (D&C 84:57).

Now we not only need to *say* more about the Book of Mormon, but we need to *do* more with it. Why? The Lord

answers: "That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion" (D&C 84:58). We have felt that scourge and judgment!

The Prophet Joseph said that "the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than any other book" (Book of Mormon, Introduction). The Book of Mormon has not been, nor is it yet, the center of our personal study, family teaching, preaching, and missionary work. Of this we must repent.

PRESIDENT ROMNEY ON READING THE BOOK OF MORMON

I do not know of a man living today who has been more true to the Book of Mormon than President Marion G. Romney. In a general conference address, he declared that the Book of Mormon was "the most effective piece of missionary literature we have." He quoted the Doctrine and Covenants, which states that "the Book of Mormon and the holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction" (D&C 33:16) and that "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" (D&C 42:12). President Romney added, "It is of course obvious that unless we read, study, and learn the principles which are in the Book of Mormon, we, the elders, priests, and teachers of this church, cannot comply with this direction to teach them.

"But there is another reason why we should read it," President Romney continued. "By doing so we will fill and refresh our minds with the constant flow of that 'water' which Jesus said would be in us—'a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (John 4:14). We must obtain a continuing supply of this water if we are to resist evil and retain the blessings of being born again. . . .

"If we would avoid adopting the evils of the world, we must pursue a course which will daily feed our minds with and call them back to the things of the Spirit. I know of no better way to do this than by reading the Book of Mormon. . . ."

And then he concluded: "And so, I counsel you, my beloved brothers and sisters and friends everywhere, to make reading in the Book of Mormon a few minutes each day a lifelong practice. . . .

"I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will

be more responsive and submissive to that counsel. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, pp. 110–13).

PRIDE

May I now discuss a subject of grave concern that deserves deeper development than we have time. It is the subject of pride.

In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride. It is always considered as a sin. We are not speaking of a wholesome view of self-worth, which is best established by a close relationship with God. But we are speaking of pride as the universal sin, as someone has described it.

Mormon writes that “the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction” (Moroni 8:27). The Lord says in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old” (D&C 38:39).

“HUMBLE YOURSELVES BEFORE GOD”

Essentially, pride is a “my will” rather than “thy will” approach to life. The opposite of pride is humbleness, meekness, submissiveness (see Alma 13:28), or teachableness.

In the early days of the restored church, the Lord warned two of its prominent members about pride. To Oliver Cowdery, He said, “Beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation” (D&C 23:1). To Emma Smith, He said, “Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride” (D&C 25:14).

“Thou shalt not be proud in thy heart,” the Lord warns us (D&C 42:40). “Humble yourselves before God,” says the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 4:10).

When the earth is cleansed by burning in the last days, the proud shall be as stubble. (See 3 Nephi 25:1; D&C 29:9; 64:24.)

The great and spacious building which Lehi saw was the pride of the world where the multitude of the earth was gathered. (See 1 Nephi 11:35–36.) Those who walked the straight and narrow path and held onto the word of God and partook of the love of God were mocked and scorned by those in the building. (See 1 Nephi 8:20, 27, 33; 11:25.)

“The humble followers of Christ” are few (2 Nephi 28:14).

NOT MY WILL BUT THINE

Pride does not look up to God and care about what is right. It looks sideways to man and argues who is right. Pride is manifest in the spirit of contention.

Was it not through pride that the devil became the devil? Christ wanted to serve. The devil wanted to rule. Christ wanted to bring men to where He was. The devil wanted to be above men.

Christ removed self as the force in His perfect life. It was not *my* will, but *thine* be done.

Pride is characterized by “What do I want out of life?” rather than by “What would God have me do with my life?” It is self-will as opposed to God’s will. It is the fear of man over the fear of God.

Humility responds to God’s will—to the fear of His judgments and the needs of those around us. To the proud, the applause of the world rings in their ears; to the humble, the applause of heaven warms their hearts.

Someone has said, “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.” Of one brother, the Lord said, “I, the Lord, am not well pleased with him, for he seeketh to excel, and he is not sufficiently meek before me” (D&C 58:41).

THE “LEARNED, AND THE RICH”

The two groups in the Book of Mormon that seemed to have the greatest difficulty with pride are the “learned, and the rich” (2 Nephi 28:15). But the word of God can pull down pride. (See Alma 4:19.)

With pride, there are many curses. With humility, there come many blessings. For example, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10). The humble will “be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge” (D&C 1:28). The Lord is “merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts” (D&C 61:2). Humility can turn away God’s anger. (See Helaman 11:11.)

MUST CLEANSE THE INNER VESSEL

My beloved brethren and sisters, as we cleanse the inner vessel, there will have to be changes made in our own personal lives, in our families, and in the Church. The proud do not change to improve, but defend their position by rationalizing. Repentance means change, and it takes a humble person to change. But we can do it.

We have made some wonderful strides in the past. We will be lengthening our stride in the future. To do so, we must first cleanse the inner vessel by awaking and arising, being morally clean, using the Book of Mormon in a manner so that God will lift the condemnation, and finally conquering pride by humbling ourselves.

We can do it. I know we can. That we will do so is my prayer for all of us. God bless you for all the good you have done and will be doing. I leave my blessings on all of you and do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING SCRIPTURAL AND DOCTRINAL INTEGRITY

EDWARD J. BRANDT
DIRECTOR, EVALUATION
DIVISION, CORRELATION
DEPARTMENT



A Current Teaching
Emphasis for the Church
Educational System, 2003
(*inservice training video*), 7–11

I have been asked by the
Church Educational System
administration to discuss
with you the topic

“Obtaining and Maintaining Scriptural and Doctrinal
Integrity,” or in other words, “striving to keep the
doctrine pure.”

I know that most of you are sincere and earnest and endeavor to give your best effort to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ as has been restored in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I have known and observed some, however, who while being sincere were sometimes wrong or in error. If false doctrine or misinterpretation of scripture or prophetic statements is given, it is usually unintentional. Sometimes we misspeak ourselves. Sometimes our preparation is lacking. We attempt to instruct in ignorance, that is, “to wing it” maybe too often. There are occasions when we have been misinformed. Sometimes, however, we assume an expertise or authority for which we have not a right. All of these factors must be carefully accounted for along with our good intentions in fulfilling our responsibilities.

Aberrations or departures from truth always have a way of surfacing to the attention of others. Departures from the truth are made manifest in a variety of ways. There stands a host of witnesses of what we are about and what we say and what we do.

When teachings seem out of order or somehow strange, they come to the attention of the Church Educational System through a variety of complaints and voices. Many of our students have a spiritual sensitivity to that which is not legitimate or seems out of order. This is often passed on to parents, or it may be observed by parents from the comments made by their children of things that seem troubling. Parents’ reports are passed on to priesthood leaders. Priesthood leaders have the opportunity to regularly interview young people and receive reports from them or others concerning things that do not seem right.

Reports are also received by principals, directors, and the administrators of the Church Educational System. Some of these matters are brought forward to the General

Authorities and Area Authorities of the Church. While the Brethren turn most of these matters of concern over to the Church Educational System administration for resolution, they are matters of note and concern to them.

Many items are also brought to the attention of the Correlation Department of the Church for review and evaluation. I have been asked to offer some suggestions as a guide and a caution that may be helpful to you in obtaining and maintaining scriptural and doctrinal integrity in your teaching.

The foundation source we turn to are the scriptures. The Lord has said that we should “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.

“And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit.

“And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:12–14).

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that:

“‘The Standard Works’ . . . are the reservoir of our doctrine from which flows the waters of gospel light. They provide the standard by which all gospel doctrine is measured. All other [materials] should spring from the word of the Lord as set forth in these volumes” (“Cornerstones of Responsibility” [regional representatives’ seminar, 5 Apr. 1991], 2).

The next building block upon which our teaching should be established is spoken of in the revelations that instruct that we should teach “none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith” (D&C 52:9).

And again that we should declare “none other things than the prophets and apostles” (D&C 52:36).

What is the unique place of the prophets and apostles as it affects our opportunities to teach?

Many years ago President J. Reuben Clark Jr., speaking to Church education instructors, taught the following:

“Some of the General Authorities [the Apostles] have had assigned to them a special calling; they possess a special gift; they are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of the people. They have the right, the power, and authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the over-all power

and authority of the President of the Church. Others of the General Authorities are not given this special spiritual endowment.” This resulting limitation “applies to every other officer and member of the Church, for none of them is spiritually endowed as prophet, seer, and revelator” (“When Are Church Leader’s Words Entitled to Claim of Scripture?” *Church News*, 31 July 1954, 9–10).

They [the prophets, seers, and revelators] have a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of the people. You and I, no other officer or member, has that same special spiritual endowment. So as we assess our primary resource materials, we need to ask ourselves as did the Apostle Paul of Timothy:

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14).

“Knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” What are your primary sources? Are the scriptures the primary source? For Paul wrote:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

“That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

There is a spirit and power in the scriptures. Use scriptural language or expressions as you teach. Do not substitute modern jargon, clichés, or your own interpretative paraphrases. Let the scriptures speak for themselves.

Proof texting—taking scriptural phrases or verses, usually out of context, and sometimes wresting them to prove a point or to establish so-called scriptural basis for our own private interpretation of something—is one of the most common ways that we can go doctrinally amiss.

The following principles taught by Elder Boyd K. Packer can be helpful in our teaching of the basic doctrines of the Church:

“First: instruction vital to our salvation is not hidden in an obscure verse or phrase in the scriptures. To the contrary, essential truths are repeated over and over again.

“Second: every verse, whether oft-quoted or obscure, must be measured against other verses. There are complementary and tempering teachings in the scriptures which bring a balanced knowledge of truth.

“Next: there is a consistency in what the Lord says and what He does. . . .

“Fourth: not all that God has said is in the Bible. Other scriptures—the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—have equal validity, and they sustain one another.

“Fifth: while much must be taken on faith alone, there is individual revelation through which we may know the truth. . . . What may be obscure in the scriptures can be made plain through the gift of the Holy Ghost. We can have as full an understanding of spiritual things as we are willing to earn” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 81; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 66).

It should also be noted that “many elements of truth come only after a lifetime of preparation” (Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 138; or *Ensign*, May 1974, 95).

There is an order or design we should follow in our preparation and teaching that will provide the gospel’s perspective and power for that which we are trying to accomplish. Again, Elder Packer instructs us:

“The course we follow is not of our own making. The plan of salvation, the great plan of happiness, was revealed to us, and the prophets and Apostles continue to receive revelation as the Church and its members stand in need of more. . . .

“. . . The scriptures provide the pattern and the basis for correct doctrine.

“From doctrine, we learn principles of conduct, how to respond to problems of everyday living” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 25–26; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 20).

“A principle is an enduring truth, a law, a rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions. Generally principles are not spelled out in detail. That leaves you free to find your way with an enduring truth, a principle, as your anchor” (Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 22; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 17).

Scripture then is the basis for doctrine. From the scriptures we are taught correct doctrine. From doctrine we are taught principles. From principles and with the help of the Spirit we can find how they might apply to our needs and circumstances today.

The result of such teaching provides a basis for personal improvement and growth:

“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” (Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).

Programs and processes and presentations without scriptural foundation and doctrinal understanding are diluted and do not have the potential and power to change people’s lives. It is upon this basis we must help our students find the application to their own lives.

Recently Elder Dallin H. Oaks illustrated the power of this:

“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. For example, they would not teach any rules for determining what is a full tithing, and they would not provide a list of *do’s* and *don’ts* for keeping the Sabbath day holy. 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.

“. . . When we teach gospel doctrine and principles, we can qualify for the witness and the guidance of the Spirit to reinforce our teaching, and we enlist the faith of our students in seeking the guidance of that same Spirit in applying those teachings in their personal lives” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 102; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 79–80).

In summary then, Elder Harold B. Lee taught:

“Our best hope of maintaining doctrinal purity rests with a membership that knows and understands doctrinal implications because they have ‘witnessed for themselves’” (“Special Challenges Facing the Church in Our Time” [regional representatives’ seminar, 3 Oct. 1968], 7).

That is, they have followed the admonition of the Savior: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17).

Adhering to these principles can be a safety net of protection to keep one from wandering from the established way, the straight and narrow path. So ask yourself the question, “Have I ever taught false doctrine?” I am sure we all have, but as we grow and learn and strive to have the Spirit of the Lord in our lives, we can correct ourselves.

Elder Boyd K. Packer has taught us:

“A member, at any given time, may not understand one point of doctrine or another, may have a misconception, or even believe something is true that in fact is false.

“There is not much danger in that. That is an inevitable part of learning the gospel. No member of the Church should be embarrassed at the need to repent of a false notion he might have believed. Such ideas are corrected as one grows in light and knowledge.

“It is not the *belief* in a false notion that is the problem, it is the *teaching* of it to others” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 43–44; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 35).

And so there is an imperative that President Harold B. Lee gave to Church education personnel many years ago. It should be a hallmark of our endeavors to teach. He said:

“Now you as teachers are not being sent out to teach new doctrine. You’re to teach the old doctrines, not so plain that they can just understand, *but you must teach the doctrines of the Church so plainly that no one can misunderstand*” (“Loyalty” [address to religious educators, 8 July 1966], 9; see also *Charge to Religious Educators*, 3rd ed. [1994], 119).

An essential ingredient in teaching the principles of the gospel is to be sensitive to the needs, the spiritual preparation, and the maturity of the students you are working with. Elder Boyd K. Packer, a master teacher, has given this wise counsel:

“Some things that are true are not very useful. . . .

“Teaching some things that are true, prematurely or at the wrong time, can invite sorrow and heartbreak instead of the joy intended to accompany learning.

“. . . The scriptures teach emphatically that we must give milk before meat. The Lord made it very clear that some things are to be taught selectively, and some things are to be given only to those who are worthy.

“It matters very much not only *what* we are told but *when* we are told it. Be careful that you build faith rather than destroy it” (*The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect* [address to the fifth annual Church Educational System religious educators symposium, 1981], 4–5).

In addition, Elder Lee has said:

“We face a tremendous task in our time in maintaining doctrinal purity. . . . *The doctrines of the Church are not ‘ours,’ but His, whose Church this is!* That we must impress upon all. Failure to keep the doctrines given by Christ pure and simple would cause much human misery here and in eternity. For this reason, fruitless speculation, fascination with the mysteries, and the tendency of some teachers to add their own personal embroidery to the fabric of the Gospel, must be resisted” (“Special Challenges Facing the Church in Our Time,” 6).

Two areas seem to cause the most difficulty for teachers who have challenges doctrinally:

One is sharing things that are inappropriate. Some think they have a higher insight, a deeper interpretation. You must examine yourself to make sure that you are not teaching something just to demonstrate that you think you know something that someone else does not, or that you are not trying to impress them or to provide information that is beyond what some call the “standard boring stuff.” Remember the warning given to one who assumed knowledge and understanding and was seeking recognition:

“And with my servant Almon Babbitt, there are many things with which I am not pleased; behold, he aspireth to establish his counsel instead of the counsel which I

have ordained, even that of the Presidency of my Church; and he setteth up a golden calf for the worship of my people” (D&C 124:84).

If you have questions arise in your mind about things you are teaching, and they come back again and again, something is amiss. Leave it alone, or at least test it with others—some of your colleagues or knowledgeable others. Ask them for honest, open impressions about what you are proposing. You may know more than it is right and proper to share. You should only teach that which you have the permission and authorization of the Holy Ghost to teach. Do not try to get ahead of the Brethren. You will become lost without the Spirit. Experience should teach you that you are not exempt from using common sense.

Other areas of concern are those matters that are tangential to the heart and soul of the gospel. They cause the teacher to deviate from that which is most important and to wander or depart from the course. Sometimes there is the temptation to entertain or to amuse. Usually these are nice to know items. Be sure to substantiate and validate from *reliable* sources what you teach. Never provide to students information based on hearsay or rumor. Things taught only for interest by and large are a waste of time.

It is important to maintain balance in what we do. Preoccupation on a particular topic or theme causes a view to be given that is improper and distorted in relationship to the other elements of the gospel. It is the playing one key over and over syndrome that some practice. For example, some have a preoccupation with Book of Mormon geography. Elder James E. Faust has said:

“It is important to know what the Book of Mormon is *not*. It is not primarily a history, although much of what it contains is historical. . . .

“[President] George Q. Cannon stated that ‘the Book of Mormon is not a geographical primer. It was not written to teach geographical truths. What is told us of the situation of the various lands or cities . . . is usually simply an incidental remark connected with the doctrinal or historical portions of the work.’ . . .

“The test for understanding this sacred book is preeminently spiritual. An obsession with secular knowledge rather than spiritual understanding will make its pages difficult to unlock” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 10–11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 10).

Concerning the Book of Mormon, President Hinckley has said:

“The evidence for its truth, for its validity in a world that is prone to demand evidence, lies not in archaeology or anthropology, though these may be helpful to some. It lies not in word research or historical analysis, though

these may be confirmatory. The evidence for its truth and validity lies within the covers of the book itself. . . .

“. . . It stands as another witness to a doubting generation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 52).

And so in summary, President J. Reuben Clark Jr., in *The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, gave these warnings:

“Great is the burden and the condemnation of any teacher who sows doubt in a trusting soul. . . .

“. . . You are not . . . to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you to be. . . .

“You are not . . . 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 Lord has declared that he is ‘the same yesterday, today, and forever’ (2 Nephi 27:23)” (rev. ed. [1994], 3, 10).

Elder Mark E. Petersen in instructing Church education personnel on one occasion said:

“Our authorities are the scriptures, the four standard works. Joseph Smith and the other Presidents and leaders are likewise our authorities. They are our file leaders. We must teach as they do. We must avoid the doctrines which they avoid” (“Avoiding Sectarianism,” in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2nd ed. [1982], 118).

Some argue, “But we are to teach by the Spirit; and I have prayed fervently, and I feel as though the Spirit has given me this additional insight, this new perspective, this greater or higher truth.”

Many years ago one of the First Presidencies of the Church issued this warning:

“Be not led by any spirit or influence that discredits established authority . . . or leads away from the direct revelations of God for the government of the Church. The Holy Ghost does not contradict its own revealings. Truth is always harmonious with itself. Piety is often the cloak of error. The counsels of the Lord through the channel he has appointed will be followed with safety” (Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, “A Warning Voice,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1913, 1149).

Remember, the Holy Ghost (the Spirit of the Lord) does not contradict itself.

It is hoped that this review of some basic fundamentals will help you in your focus as teachers in the Church Educational System. What a marvelous opportunity you

have to instruct our Father in Heaven's spirit sons and daughters here in mortality and to teach them of the eternal truths.

Continue to be prayerful, be prepared, be focused by keeping it simple and direct. And make sure everything you teach is built upon the scriptures and the teachings

of the prophets and apostles, for they have a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teachings. Follow these scripturally based doctrinal principles, for there is safety in doing so, and the blessings of heaven will attend your teaching. Remember too, you teach what you are. Keep your personal, temporal, and spiritual affairs in order.

THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

*Address to religious educators at
a symposium on the Doctrine and
Covenants and Church history,
Brigham Young University,
10 August 1993*



I talked to President William E. Berrett not too many days ago. He was still in the hospital. Now he is resting comfortably; resting in sweet anticipation of what will, in the near future, be his graduation.

Some time ago he told Brother Tuttle and me that when he was a teenager in the southern part of the Salt Lake Valley, which was then a rural area, the young people in the ward were a bunch of roustabouts, just like they are in your ward—just like they are in your class. That was about the time seminary was started. A worried bishop called a man to teach the youth. Brother Berrett described him as a convert from the old country who could not speak English very well. That was one reason not to call him. He was an old man; another reason not to call him. But the bishop called him.

Then Brother Berrett told of the class period. At first they could not quite understand him. Brother Berrett concluded his description of this period in his life by saying, "The teacher murdered the Queen's English every sentence, but we could warm our hands by the fire of his faith." "We could warm our hands by the fire of his faith." He accorded to that teacher a major influence in what was to happen to him later in life.

I have tried over the years to stay close to Church education. I have personally known virtually all of the pioneers in the seminary and institute program from the beginning. The contribution that they have made in my life has been without price; it couldn't be estimated.

You all know about the crises of values in the world and the sobering influence it has upon many in the Church.

You know the challenge you face with the young people by virtue of that. It is not unlike what Mosiah faced when:

"It came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.

"They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ.

"And now because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened" (Mosiah 26:1–3).

Later Alma encountered Korihor, the anti-Christ, and faced the apostasy of the Zoramites—I think, not unlike some things that are happening in the Church today.

Not too many days ago, in a moment of great concern over a rapid series of events that demonstrated the challenge of those within the Church who have that feeling of criticism and challenge and apostasy, I had an impression, as revelations are. It was strong and it was clear, because lingering in my mind was: "Why? Why—when we need so much to be united?" And there came the answer: "It is permitted to be so now that the sifting might take place, and it will have negligible effect upon the Church."

Alma faced Korihor and the apostasy of the Zoramites, but he was not in doubt as to what had to be done. The record says:

"As the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God" (Alma 31:5).

"It was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God."

Individual doctrines of the gospel are not fully explained in one place in the scriptures, nor presented in order or sequence. They must be assembled from pieces here and there. They are sometimes found in large segments, but

mostly they are in small bits scattered through the chapters and verses.

You might think that if all the references on baptism, for instance, were assembled in one chapter of each standard work, and all references on revelation in another, it would make the learning of the gospel much simpler. I have come to be very, very grateful that scriptures are arranged as they are. Because the scriptures are arranged the way they are, there are endless combinations of truths that will fit the need of every individual in every circumstance.

When I was overseas in the military, seriously studying the Book of Mormon for the first time, I became acquainted with the simple references and footnotes of those days. I followed a footnote from an early chapter in the Book of Mormon to a verse in a later one. The subject changed. I had found a mistake in the footnotes, or so I thought!

Then, suddenly, as an insight—a revealed insight, I could see the relationship of the two subjects. I concluded not only was there no error, but whoever arranged those footnotes was inspired indeed.

Our youth need to know how to mark the scriptures, and they need to have some kind of filing system. In addition to that, if you give each one of them a framework upon which the truths they discover at random can be organized into a personal testimony, you will have served them well.

After I had taught seminary for a number of years, I discovered something that made a difference in how much students learned and how much they remembered.

What I discovered was this: there is great value in presenting a *brief* but very carefully organized overview of the entire course at the very beginning.

Take, for example, a course in Church history. A class period or two of preview, covering the Apostasy, the Restoration, the Martyrdom, the persecutions, the move west, the expansion of the Church worldwide, all in just a class period or two, provides a framework upon which the students may organize the information that you will present as they retrace that same journey at a much slower pace and as the course unfolds. It is something like the overture in an opera or a musical.

Those few beginning periods, so brief an investment of time by comparison, make it possible for the students to locate themselves anywhere along the way. They have something of a feeling. They retain much more when they know how all of the pieces fit together, and the light of learning shines more brightly. The preview forms a framework and is more than worth the time and work invested in it.

My only regret is that my discovery of this principle was made near the end, rather than at the beginning, of my

seminary work. How much more the students might have learned if I had discovered it earlier.

Whatever course you teach, a brief overview, even in outline form, can form a framework upon which our youth can place the truths you will present, many of which come at random.

There is one framework that fits every course you teach. Elements of it are everywhere in the scriptures. It has many names:

- The merciful plan of the great Creator (see 2 Nephi 9:6).
- The plan of mercy (see Alma 42:15).
- The great plan of mercy (see Alma 42:31).
- The plan of redemption (see Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–26, 30, 32; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13–14; 29:2; 39:18; 42:11, 13).
- The eternal plan of redemption (see Alma 34:16).
- The great plan of redemption (see Alma 34:31).
- The plan of salvation (see Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62).
- The plan of our God (see 2 Nephi 9:13).
- The great plan of the Eternal God (see Alma 34:9).
- The eternal plan of deliverance (see 2 Nephi 11:5).
- The plan of happiness (see Alma 42:16).
- The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8).
- The plan of restoration (see Alma 41:2).
- The plan of the Gods (see Abraham 4:21).

All but two of those references come from the Book of Mormon; two are found in the Pearl of Great Price.

A brief overview of the “plan of happiness” (which is my choice, my favorite title, in talking of the plan), if given at the very beginning and revisited occasionally, will be of immense value to your students.

I have an assignment for you. You expected that, didn’t you? You are assigned to prepare a brief synopsis or overview of the plan of happiness—the plan of salvation. Design it as a framework on which your students can organize the truths you will share with them.

At first you may think that a simple assignment. I assure you, it is not. Brevity and simplicity are remarkably difficult to achieve. At first you will be tempted to include too much. The plan in its fulness encompasses every gospel truth.

Some Saints leaving Nauvoo were not able to obey the load limit set by the Brethren. They paid dearly for it later. You, like them, will want to include too much in your overview. You will be pained at what you must leave

out. The handcart pioneers were only allowed to take seventy pounds. This preview is a “handcart preview.”

This may be the most difficult, and surely the most rewarding, assignment of your teaching career.

Your overview of the plan of happiness should be but a sweeping glance across the unfolded scroll of scriptural truths. Your students can thereafter locate themselves in respect to the plan.

Young people wonder “why?”—Why are we commanded *to do* some things, and why we are commanded *not* to do other things? A knowledge of the plan of happiness, even in outline form, can give young minds a “why.”

A parent once angrily scolded a child for a serious mistake, saying, “Why on earth did you do such a thing?” The child answered, “If I’d had a ‘why,’ I wouldn’t have done it.”

Providing your students with a collection of unrelated truths will hurt as much as it helps. Provide a basic feeling for the whole plan, even with just a few details, and it will help them ever so much more. Let them know what it’s all about, then they will have the “why.”

Most of the difficult questions we face in the Church right now, and we could list them—abortion and all the rest of them, all of the challenges of who holds the priesthood and who does not—cannot be answered without some knowledge of the plan as a background.

Alma said this, and this is, I think of late, my favorite scripture, although I change now and again: “God gave unto them *commandments*, *after* having made known unto them the *plan of redemption*” (Alma 12:32; emphasis added). Let me say that again: “God gave unto them commandments, *after* having made known unto them the plan of redemption.” Now, let me say it again: “God gave unto them commandments, *AFTER* having made known unto them the plan of redemption.”

As President Harold B. Lee often said: Don’t tell them so they’ll understand; tell them so they can’t possibly misunderstand (see “Loyalty” [address to religious educators, 8 July 1966], p. 9 . . .). If you are trying to give them a “why,” follow that pattern: “God gave unto them commandments, *after* having made known unto them the plan of redemption.”

You will not be with your students or your own children at the time of their temptations. At those dangerous moments they must depend on their own resources. If they can locate themselves within the framework of the gospel plan, they will be immensely strengthened.

The plan is worthy of repetition over and over again. Then the purpose of life, the reality of the Redeemer, and the reason for the commandments will stay with them.

Their gospel study, their life experiences, will add to an ever-growing witness of the Christ, of the Atonement, of the restoration of the gospel.

I was really tempted to prepare a brief overview of the plan of happiness as a model for you to follow. And then I thought better of it. You need to prepare the outline yourself. Only then will you present it persuasively. I repeat, it will not be easy. I should think it will take you several months, if you do it right. It will require study and prayer and work. There is no question but that you will learn more in the process than any one of your students will learn. The very doing of it is your reward.

I will give you the barest outline of the plan as a beginning, but you must assemble your framework yourself.

The essential components of the *great plan of happiness, of redemption, of salvation*, are these:

Premortal existence

 Spiritual creation

 Agency

 War in heaven

Physical creation

The Fall and mortality

 Principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ (first principles: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, . . .)

The Atonement

Life beyond the grave

 Spirit world

 Judgment

 Resurrection

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., taught us in *The Charted Course of the Church in Education*—surely you read that every year, every one of you, every year. It is revelation; it is as much revelation as that which you find if you open the standard works, and I will quote from it:

“Our youth are not children spiritually; they are well on toward the normal spiritual maturity of the world. To treat them as children spiritually, as the world might treat the same age group, is therefore and likewise an anachronism. I say once more, 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. 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, in their natural guise. Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches, for ‘bedtime’ stories, for coddling, for patronizing, or for any of the other childish devices used in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperienced and all but spiritually dead” (1992 rev. ed. [address to religious educators, 8 Aug. 1938], p. 9).

Read *The Charted Course of the Church in Education*. That makes two assignments.

There are fundamental truths which, if understood, will help our youth understand the plan of happiness and entice them to remain faithful.

If you agree with President Clark, and I certainly do, that our youth have a spiritual maturity, you can open to them the truths of immortality and eternity.

Convince them of the reality of spiritual things. First teach them that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). Man is a dual being, a spirit within a mortal body.

It is difficult to teach about the intangible, spiritual part. But there are ways to do it. For example, your students know about computers. A personal computer made of metal, plastic, glass, and a dozen other materials will hold an astonishing amount of information. All of the standard works can be stored there, and in addition, sets of encyclopedias, dictionaries, books on a whole library of subjects, even illustrations and mathematical formulas.

With the press of a few keys, one can select any part of what is stored and see it instantly on a screen. One may, by pressing a few more keys, rearrange, add to, or subtract from what is stored in the computer. Press another key or two and you can print a copy of whatever you desire, even in full color. You then can hold in your hand tangible, absolute proof of what is inside there and how it is arranged.

If, however, you should take the computer completely apart, you could not find one word of it, not one illustration, not one tangible evidence that there are volumes, verses, poems, and illustrations inside the computer.

You could dissolve the computer with acids or burn it and you would not find one tangible word of evidence. You could no more find words in the ashes of a computer than you can find the spirit in the ashes of a cremated human body.

No one doubts that this great base of information is actually stored in the computer. It should not be too difficult to teach each youngster that there is within the human body a spirit. Notwithstanding that it is invisible

and intangible, it is the very essence of reality. You can, in context of the gospel plan, explain what that spirit is. Let me say that again. You can, in context of the gospel plan, explain what that spirit is, where it came from, and what the destiny of each of us is.

Teach them to know that each is “the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in [them]” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Show them what the scriptures teach of the light of Christ, “the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the *law* by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:13; emphasis added; compare John 1:9; D&C 84:45–47; 88:6), and the “Spirit of Jesus Christ . . . [which] giveth light to *every* man that cometh into the world” (D&C 84:45–46; emphasis added; compare D&C 88:1–13; John 1:9; Moroni 7:15–19).

Whether this inner light, this knowledge of right and wrong, is called the light of Christ, moral sense, or conscience, it moderates our actions, unless, that is, we subdue it or destroy it. It is an ingredient which has no counterpart in animals.

Lehi taught, “Men are instructed sufficiently that they *know* good from evil. And the *law* is given unto men” (2 Nephi 2:5; emphasis added).

What we call the conscience affirms the reality of the spirit of Christ in man. It affirms, as well, the reality of good and evil, justice, mercy, honor, courage, faith, love, and virtue, as well as their necessary opposites—hatred, greed, brutality, and jealousy (see 2 Nephi 2:11, 16). Such values, though intangible, respond to laws with cause and effect relationships as certain as any physical laws.

“Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

“All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

“Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.

“And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation.

“For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

“And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

“The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.

“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

“Light and truth forsake that evil one.

“Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

“And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

“But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:29–40.)

Teach them about law. A law is an invariably consistent rule, independent and irrevocable in its existence. Teach them that consequences always follow the observance of, the breaking of, even the ignoring of a law.

Laws govern the physical universe with such constancy and precision that once man has discovered them, he can, by their effect, demonstrate their existence with unflinching accuracy.

Teach them to respect laws, both physical and spiritual.

Laws do not change. A law, like truth, “abideth and hath no end” (D&C 88:66). A theory is tentative, subject to change, and may or may not be true. A theory is a means to an end, not the end in itself.

There are moral and spiritual laws pertaining to values—good and evil, right and wrong—laws as constant, precise, and valid as those that govern the physical universe.

There are theories passed about that teach man that he is but an animal and therefore exempt from keeping the moral standard.

Laws governing spiritual things were irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundation of the earth (see D&C 130:20). Often young people fail to accept moral and spiritual laws because the laws are not measured by methods they have been accustomed to using. Physical or natural laws are much easier to demonstrate, and can be useful in teaching about spiritual things.

Let me illustrate. At sea level, water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit and changes from a liquid to a solid. At 212 degrees Fahrenheit, it turns into a gas. Your students know that, and there isn’t anything they can do about it—they cannot change it. It can be described accurately or inaccurately, in complicated measurements in Fahrenheit or centigrade or anything else, and nothing that is said about it is going to change it because it operates according to law. It will freeze or evaporate according to the law.

It should not be difficult to understand that there are basic spiritual laws that have always existed, that never change, that beget consequences; and we can’t change

them. The wonder is that we can depend on these spiritual laws. “Wickedness never was happiness” (see Alma 41:10), and anybody that has tried to find out, has found out. It is a law.

If your students do not accept spiritual laws to be as fixed as the laws that govern nature, I don’t know of any way to explain to them what the word *atonement* means in the scriptures. The law of justice required that the broken law be satisfied. The Atonement was a vicarious act of the Messiah. Through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, through the Atonement, all mankind *will* be redeemed from mortal death by resurrection, and all mankind *may* be redeemed from spiritual death, if they repent.

The events from the Creation to the final winding-up scene are all governed by law. Our destiny is not based on *chance*. It is based on *choice*! It was planned that way before the world was. It all works according to the plan, the great plan of happiness.

Man is a dual being, “For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33).

Finally, teach your students to see with the eyes they possessed before they had a mortal body; teach them to hear with ears they possessed before they were born; teach them to push back the curtains of mortality and see into the eternities.

We become accustomed to thinking in terms of beginnings and endings. We see birth as our beginning and death as the end. We measure everything in-between in segments of time: minutes, hours, years, each with a beginning—each with an end. That is the way of mortal life.

Youth must be taught to expand their minds and to think in spiritual terms. They must know that there was no beginning and there will be no end. Then they will begin to understand the plan of redemption.

In truth:

*There is no end to matter;
There is no end to space;
There is no end to spirit,
There is no end to race.*

*There is no end to virtue;
There is no end to might;
There is no end to wisdom;
There is no end to light.*

*There is no end to union;
There is no end to youth;
There is no end to priesthood;
There is no end to truth.*

(“If You Could Hie to Kolob,” *Hymns*, no. 284).

Teach your students to accept truth, even though they don't quite understand it at first. Some things had no beginning and will never end. I had the thought that I would prepare something of an outline of the plan "from beginning to end," and then I caught myself—remembering there was no beginning and that there will be no end.

Expand your minds and see into the eternities. It helps to go out on a clear night and look into the heavens. There, even with mortal eyes, one can see the endless expanse of creation. And with spiritual "eyes"—the eyes of our understanding; and there are so many references to that in the scriptures, for instance, Doctrine and Covenants section 110, "the eyes of our understanding were opened. We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit" (vv. 1–2).

If we understand that the seeing with those spiritual eyes conforms more closely to the word *feel*—that is the way we see spiritually—then we will begin to get a feeling that there is something more.

Open their "eyes of understanding" and help them get a feeling for the immense endless creation. Convince them that it works with such precision and order that man could not have created it. He can hardly measure it with the most precise instruments that he can invent.

Teach them there is another sphere that man belongs to, even while in the temporal world. *Temporal* means temporary. That fits the world; that fits the human body. The words *endless, forever and ever, without end* describe our spiritual destiny. When you get a body that has been renewed and a spirit that was eternal in the first place, then comes the fulness of joy.

Show them that things known through the mortal senses are limited, but spiritual things are not. They will begin to learn that which cannot be taught through the mortal senses.

Teach them that we are spirit children of God, housed in a mortal body, that the plan works according to eternal law, and that there was no beginning and will be no end. Then they will understand the plan of redemption spoken of in the scriptures.

Tell them truths they may not understand, but which, if accepted as true on faith, will open the eyes of their understanding to glorious spiritual things.

Teach them the correct order of things in learning of the spirit. They must learn to accept as truth first, on faith, without understanding, and then they will come to know. The spiritual truths will be confirmed to them.

The plan of happiness, the plan of redemption, is true. They can take that on trust. Do not be afraid to press those truths upon them. You will not mislead them, and

they will not be misled if you teach them to have faith in that plan.

Teach them to be like those of ancient times "whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad" (Ether 12:19).

Teach them that if they "search diligently, pray always, and be believing, . . . all things shall work together for [their] good" (D&C 90:24).

If they understand that there was no beginning and that there will be no end and that just as all nature is governed by law, all spiritual things are governed by laws which are spiritual, they are ready to understand the plan, the great plan of the eternal God.

He commanded us that we are to bring up our children in light and truth and that we should teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. And so to you:

"Teach ye diligently and [his] grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

"Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

"That [you and they] may be prepared in all things when [he] shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto [he has] called you, and the mission with which [he has] commissioned you" (D&C 88:78–80).

God bless you, my fellow teachers. I invoke his blessings upon you that through you the countless thousands of youngsters who come under your tutelage may come to know and comprehend the great plan of the eternal God—the plan of happiness. Then they may find themselves. I pray that you might be an instrument in their lives as that halting emigrant was in the life of that great teacher of whom we spoke, Brother William E. Berrett.

I pray that he will bless you in your homes and in your families, that as you are serving the youth, saving his children, he in turn will save yours, that you will be watched over in your material affairs, that you may have the wherewithal to sustain your families with the necessities and conveniences and perhaps even luxuries as you move through life, that those things that make life worthwhile, things that are lovely and praiseworthy and of good report, will be given to you.

May he bless you that you will have the witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, that this is his church, that he is our Redeemer, that the plan in which all of us are now participants will unfold as the scriptures have revealed it to us, and you can, figuratively speaking and in a literal way, take the hands of these thousands of young people and lead them forward, that they might in due time return to his presence.

I bear witness that he lives. I know that he lives. I have that witness. It is he who presides over this church. He directs his work. He is no stranger to his servants here upon the earth. I thank you for the service you have rendered. I bear that witness to you and invoke that blessing upon you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

TEACH THE SCRIPTURES

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

*Excerpt from an address to
religious educators, 14 October
1977, 4–7*

In the history of the Church there is no better illustration of the prophetic preparation of this people than the beginnings of the seminary and institute program. These programs were started when they were nice but were not critically needed. They were granted a season to flourish and to grow into a bulwark for the Church. They now become a godsend for the salvation of modern Israel in a most challenging hour. We are now encircled. Our youth are in desperate jeopardy. These are the last days, foreseen by prophets in ancient times.

I will read one clear, descriptive, accurate prophecy, so old as to be ancient but so timely that evidence of every statement can be seen in today's news releases.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents [can you imagine that being prophesied?], unthankful, unholy.

Without natural affection [we see a tidal wave of sexual perversion now sweeping in around us, to say nothing of the hideous specter of child abuse that now is becoming common even among our people], truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.



[When you think of what is happening in society today, the next verse has tremendous meaning.]

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Timothy 3:1–7.)

That prophetic description of our day is accurate. The evil circumstances it describes encircle *every* student you teach.

While studying one day, I read to that point and sat pondering about all the evidence that now confirms every element in that prophecy. There was a mood of very deep gloom and foreboding, a very ominous feeling of frustration, almost futility. I glanced down the page, and one word stood out, not accidentally I think. I read it eagerly and then discovered that the apostle who had prophesied all of that trouble had included in the same discourse the immunization against all of it. Skipping a few verses, I will continue from the same chapter.

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them;

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:13–17.)

And there you have it—your commission, your charter, your objective in religious education. You are to teach the scriptures. That is the word that stood out on the page—*scriptures*. If your students are acquainted with the revelations, there is no question—personal or social or political or occupational—that need go unanswered.

Therein is contained the fulness of the everlasting gospel. Therein we find principles of truth that will resolve every confusion and every problem and every dilemma that will face the human family or any individual in it.

We live in a day of great events relating to the scriptures. It has been only a short time since two revelations were added to the standard works. . . .

The first revelation [Doctrine and Covenants 137], given to Joseph Smith the Prophet in the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, on January 21, 1836, is a vision of the celestial kingdom, in which the doctrine of salvation for the dead was revealed.

The second [Doctrine and Covenants 138] was a vision given to Joseph F. Smith on October 3, 1918. He saw how the gospel will be carried to those who have died without receiving it in mortality. Both are on the same subject, and that is not without very significant import.

I was surprised, and I think all of the Brethren were surprised, at how casually that announcement of two additions to the standard works was received by the Church. But we will live to sense the significance of it; we will tell our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, and we will record in our diaries, that we were on the earth and remember when that took place.

For four years, there has been a great deal of work underway to devise means whereby the scriptures can be more easily studied by the members of the Church. The first part of this tremendous project involves cross-referencing the King James Version of the Bible with all of the standard works. This project, now well under way, is so monumental in its scope that it could not possibly have been attempted without the aid of computers. In addition to cross-referencing, there will be helpful material added to clarify the Hebrew meaning of some words and, where appropriate, some explanatory material from the Joseph Smith Translation. All of this material will be placed in very readable footnote format at the bottom of the Bible pages.

One of the major achievements of this project will be the inclusion in the Bible of what we have come to call the topical guide. In many of the biblical verses there are so many significant references available from the standard works, that it would be cumbersome to list them all in the footnotes. Therefore, it was determined to accumulate these references under major headings and list them alphabetically by topic for easy reference. For instance, under the word *family* in the topical guide, there are eight major headings. These are family; family, children, duties of; family, children, responsibilities toward; family, eternal; family, home evenings with; family, love within; family, managing finances in; family, patriarchal. In one of those categories alone there are over eighty references taken

from all of the standard works. You can see why they could not all go into the footnotes. . . .

In the Bible edition presently being prepared there will be included also a Bible dictionary that will reflect Latter-day Saint theology. Many items in existing dictionaries can be given further explanation because of the greater light shed through Latter-day Saint revelations; so our own Bible dictionary is in preparation, and it is excellent. . . .

Now, these four years of tremendous, monumental effort are but a beginning. One day all the standard works will be so organized and prepared, to make them one monumental testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father. The doctrines of salvation must be available to all mankind, not just in their hands, but in their heads and hearts. And you and I, all of us, are to be a part of this. Never since the foundation of the world has such a thing been attempted, but it is now well under way.

From the humble beginning fifteen years ago, the whole curriculum of the Church has been reconstructed, coordinated, and fastened permanently and securely on the foundation of the scriptures. . . .

I said before that there isn't a major problem we face that we can't be immunized against if we know the revelations. There comes to mind one illustration that I'd like to mention.

In the presidential election about a year ago both major candidates wanted to be enough in favor of abortion to get half the votes, and enough opposed to get the other half. It was then, and is now, a significant political issue. Where do we in the Church stand? How do we know what to do? Where can we get information to help us decide? Well, if we know the revelations, we have read this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, *nor do anything like unto it.*" (D&C 59:6. Italics added.)

Thou shalt not kill, "*nor do anything like unto it.*" Any Latter-day Saint familiar with the revelations need not be wafted to and fro by any issue that is about in the world.

Do you see, my brethren, do you see, my sisters, the tremendous, monumental work that is rolling forth in this church and kingdom of God? Do you see a mighty retrenching force preparing this people? Do you see glory? You and I, each of us, all of us, have a part in this. Your work in this great vineyard is the cultivation of the tender shoots. Guard them, guide them well, nourish them. Dig about them and prune them as required, and they will not bring forth wild fruit.

If you will read the allegory of the tame and wild olive tree in the book of Jacob and apply it to what I've been

saying, you might for the first time understand some of the parts of it. In the early days of this dispensation the Lord brought us here to the nethermost part of the vineyard. And as the tree matured, cuttings were taken and formed into stakes and driven into the soil of every nation where the servants of the Lord could go. And they have flourished and have brought forth much fruit. Do you see the vision of it? Do you see your part in it? Do you not sense a feeling of warmth and glory to know that you are a part of such a thing?

These words are from the First Presidency in 1907: “Our motives are not selfish; our purposes not petty and earth-bound; we contemplate the human race—past, present, and yet to come—as immortal beings, for whose salvation it is our mission to labor; and to this work, broad as eternity and deep as the love of God, we devote

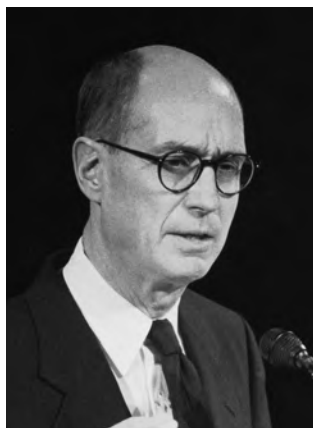
ourselves, now, and forever.” (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, *Improvement Era*, May 1907, p. 495.)

I wish I had the power somehow to convey something of the vision that, in a quiet way, has been going on in the Church. We have seen tremendous attention given to the revelations; a great restructuring and a fitting in place of the foundations and the underpinnings have been accomplished; and now we are ready. And as we see that tidal wave moving around us, we could say, as President Brigham Young did when he was informed that Johnson’s army was approaching, “We ask no odds, let them come.” There was a quiet spiritual defiance in him because he knew in whom he trusted. And just as they were not asleep, we are not asleep now.

WE MUST RAISE OUR SIGHTS

ELDER HENRY B. EYRING OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

*Address to religious educators
at a conference on the Book of
Mormon, Brigham Young
University, 14 August 2001*



I am grateful for that music, beautifully sung, and perfectly chosen for the message and for the purpose that I believe I have been given tonight. I’m grateful to Brother Stanley Peterson for his introduction. One of the things that is most pleasant in my being allowed to be the Commissioner of Education and still go on associating with you and with people like you and Brother Peterson is that from time to time I have the chance to sense the appreciation of the Savior for you and for him. I think you need to know that I have had clear and unmistakable evidence that the Lord knows Brother Peterson and has watched over him and is grateful and is pleased. I believe he was inspired to have the volunteers and missionaries stand so that I might for a second feel not *my* gratitude but the Master’s gratitude.

I was also touched by the opening prayer, to have someone who has given such long full-time service be asked to pray. Because again, as he prayed, I had a sense that some of you who are full-time people have labored in obscurity. But you are not obscure, and your work is known.

I am grateful to be with you and for our opportunity to teach the gospel to the young people of the Church. They hold the future in their hands. The Church has

always been one generation away from extinction. If a whole generation were lost, which will not happen, we would lose the Church. But even a single individual lost to the gospel of Jesus Christ closes doors for generations of descendants, unless the Lord reaches out to bring some of them back. Our trust from the Lord as teachers of youth is great. And so is our opportunity.

The world in which our students choose spiritual life or death is changing rapidly. When their older brothers and sisters return to visit the same schools and campuses they attended, they find a radically different moral climate. The language in the hallways and the locker rooms has coarsened. Clothing is less modest. Pornography has moved into the open. Tolerance for wickedness has not only increased, but much of what was called wrong is no longer condemned at all and may, even by our students, be admired. Parents and administrators have in many cases bent to the pressures coming from a shifting world to retreat from moral standards once widely accepted.

The spiritual strength sufficient for our youth to stand firm just a few years ago will soon not be enough. Many of them are remarkable in their spiritual maturity and in their faith. But even the best of them are sorely tested. And the testing will become more severe.

The youth are responsible for their own choices. And there are many others to help them. Faithful parents and priesthood and youth leaders shore up the faith of the students we teach. But ours is a unique opportunity. Students at our Church universities and colleges have been required to take our religion classes. The prophets of God have repeatedly endorsed seminary and institute classes and urged the youth to become our students. We are given a regular, often daily, opportunity to meet with

them where the word of God from the scriptures is the text and we are their trusted guides.

You and those who have gone before you have done a wonderful work. The world has changed but so has our curriculum. Students in seminary and institute and in our campus religion classes are reading the scriptures and understanding them. If you were not teaching with us twenty-five years ago, you may not sense the great sweep of that change. Where once there was a wealth of material calculated to hold the wandering interest of young people and even entertain them, the words of the scriptures are now doing the holding. In your classes students know the scriptures beyond what their older brothers and sisters, or their parents, did. You have made the scriptures live for them.

But they need more. Too many graduates of seminary fail to qualify for the mission field. Too many of our faithful students never receive the blessings of the temple ordinances. The proportion of those tragedies among them will increase if we do not change.

The place to begin is with our aim, our vision of what we seek in the lives of our students. We have always sought to enroll and hold students in our classes. We have aimed to see them persist to graduation. We have always had a goal that they will qualify for the mission field and for temple marriage and then remain faithful. Those are lofty, difficult goals, but we must raise our sights.

Too many of our students want the blessings of a mission and the temple and yet fail to endure to claim them. For many of our students, next year is a long way away, and beyond a year looks like forever. To them, missions and the temple are far distant, in some time when the joys of youth have flown away. Those goals are distant enough that too many, far too many, say to themselves: "Well, I know I may have to repent some day, and I know that a mission and temple marriage will require big changes, but I can always take care of that when the time comes. I have a testimony. I know the scriptures. I know what it takes to repent. I'll see the bishop when it's time and I'll make the changes later. I'm only young once. For now, I'll go with the flow."

Well, the flow has become a flood and soon will be a torrent. It will become a torrent of sounds and sights and sensations that invite temptation and offend the Spirit of God. Swimming back upstream to purity against the tides of the world was never easy. It is getting harder and may soon be frighteningly difficult.

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. That is when they make the daily choices that will bless or mar their lives. That is when the pressures of temptation and spiritual confusion are increasing.

THE PURE GOSPEL CHANGES HEARTS AND LIVES

The pure gospel of Jesus Christ must go down into the hearts of students by the power of the Holy Ghost. It will not be enough for them to have had a spiritual witness of the truth and to want good things later. It will not be enough for them to hope for some future cleansing and strengthening. Our aim must be for them to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us.

Then they will have gained a strength from what they are, not only from what they know. They will become disciples of Christ. They will be His spiritual children who always remember Him with gratitude and in faith. They will then have the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. Their hearts will be turned outward, concerned for the temporal and spiritual welfare of others. They will walk humbly. They will feel cleansed and they will look on evil with abhorrence.

The Book of Mormon describes such a change and testifies that it is possible. The accounts are found everywhere in the book. One evidence is the experience of the people of King Benjamin, the master teacher:

"And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them.

"And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.

"And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.

"And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy.

"And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God.

“And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is a righteous covenant.

“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:1–7).

That mighty change is reported time after time in the Book of Mormon. The way it is wrought and what the person becomes is always the same. The words of God in pure doctrine go down deep into the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. The person pleads with God in faith. The repentant heart is broken and the spirit contrite. Sacred covenants have been made. Then God keeps His covenant to grant a new heart and a new life, in His time.

TEACH THE PURE GOSPEL IN A SIMPLE WAY

Whether the miracle comes in a moment or over years, as is far more common, it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ that drives the change. We sometimes underestimate the power that pure doctrine has to penetrate the hearts of people. Why did so many respond to the words of the missionaries when the Church was so young, so small, and seemingly so strange? What did Brigham Young and John Taylor and Heber C. Kimball preach in the streets and on the hills of England? They taught that the Lord had opened a new dispensation, that He had given us a Prophet of God, that the priesthood was restored, that the Book of Mormon was the word of God, and that we had a glorious new day. They taught that the pure gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored.

That pure doctrine went down into the hearts then, as it will now, because the people were starved and the doctrine was taught simply. The people of England, and our students, were seen long before by a prophet of God named Amos:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

“And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

“In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst” (Amos 8:11–13).

Most of those early converts in England had known they were hungry for the true word of God. 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. If we make the doctrine simple and clear, and if we teach out of our own changed hearts, the change for them will come as surely as it did for Enos. Listen to his account, so similar to the others:

“Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it—

“And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins.

“Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.

“And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:1–4).

And then the miracle came:

“And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

“And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

“And I said: Lord, how is it done?

“And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole” (vv. 5–8).

Then Enos describes the first effects:

“Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them” (v. 9).

He ends with a description of the lasting effects:

“And it came to pass that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem.

“And I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days, and have rejoiced in it above that of the world.

“And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice

in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen” (vv. 25–27).

A DEEP CHANGE IN OUR STUDENTS

What we seek for our students is that change. We must be humble about our part in it. True conversion depends on a student seeking freely in faith, with great effort and some pain. Then it is the Lord who can grant, in His time, the miracle of cleansing and change. Each person starts from a different place, with a different set of experiences, and so a different need for cleansing and for change. The Lord knows that place and so only He can set the course.

But for all of our students, we can play a vital part. Enos remembered the words of eternal life that he had been taught. So did Nephi, and so did the people of King Benjamin. The words had been placed in memory in such a way that the Holy Ghost could take them deep into the heart. We are teachers whose charge is to place those words so that when the student chooses and pleads, the Holy Ghost can confirm them in the heart and the miracle can begin.

THE PURE DOCTRINE TAUGHT IN PLAINNESS

Much of the power of the Book of Mormon is that it presents the pure doctrine so plainly. For instance, as if He were speaking to us, the Lord through prophets gave us these words in 2 Nephi:

“And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen” (2 Nephi 31:21).

And the Lord repeats Himself, as if we might misunderstand:

“And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

“And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

“And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 11:32–35).

And He goes on to say it yet again:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

“And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

“Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth” (vv. 39–41).

You wonderful teachers already put great effort and sacrifice into your preparation to teach the word, into your teaching, and into caring for students. You more than study, you ponder the words of God. You declare them with faith and with testimony. You fast and plead in prayer for help, for your students and for yourselves. You teach the pure doctrine with testimony and in clarity.

A HIGHER VISION

But there is more. We can raise our sights by adding greater faith that the change promised by the Lord will come to our students. The teachers of the Church Educational System had faith that the students would take the scriptures into their lives, and they did. Of all the great contributions Stan Peterson can look back on with satisfaction, it is that he was a major force in allowing that miracle, that I think he will someday find, when the Lord shows him the sweep of things, was, if not his greatest contribution, one of the greatest. He drew from you the faith that a mighty change could come.

You can now add your faith that more of our students will make the choices that lead to true conversion. The Lord always keeps His promises. We can exercise our faith that He will keep His word, for our students and for ourselves.

You have already been prepared. You have felt the desire to repent and be cleansed when these words went down into your heart:

“And assuredly, as the Lord liveth, for the Lord God hath spoken it, and it is his eternal word, which cannot pass away, that they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still; wherefore, they who are filthy are the devil and his angels; and they shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for them; and

their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever and has no end.

“O the greatness and the justice of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his mouth, and his law must be fulfilled.

“But, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever” (2 Nephi 9:16–18).

You have also felt your heart swell with love just as it is described in the words from Moroni (think of your own experiences—remember):

“And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God” (Moroni 8:26).

Each of you have at some time in your life, because of the power of the Atonement, felt relief when a temptation no longer seemed appealing to you, exactly as in the words in Alma:

“And it came to pass that when Ammon arose he also administered unto them, and also did all the servants of Lamoni; and they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil” (Alma 19:33).

And you’ve felt spots on your soul fade just as it did for these servants of God, described in these words from Alma:

“Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

“Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

“And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest” (Alma 13:11–13).

And you have also felt this: you have felt yourself look up, and feast on the words of the Master and His love, just as promised in the words of Jacob, and just as some of you may have experienced in this very hour we are together:

“O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever” (Jacob 3:2).

You know what I know. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that the promises are true. Our Heavenly Father lives. Jesus is the Christ. By faith in Him and keeping His commandments, we and our students can have eternal life. I know that the word of God can be carried into the hearts of men and women by the power of the Holy Ghost. And I know that the blessing the Lord has given so freely since the world began, of a new heart, unspotted and filled with His pure love, is still offered in His true Church. I testify that He has called you to teach and that He invites all who will to become His true disciples, His sons and His daughters.

A CONCLUDING BLESSING

Now as I close I need to share with you the desire of my heart. I have prayed that I might have the opportunity to bless you. You know about blessings. *All blessings are contingent*. I know what I want you to have, and I know what I want for your students and for your families. But it is not enough that I want it. I had to know, is it what God is now ready to give? Are you ready to do what you must do to receive the gift? Are your students ready? I have prayed to know that, and I have been given assurance, both as to the blessing He would give you, and that you and your students are prepared to receive the blessing.

The reason I take a moment to explain this to you is that I need to explain to you the way you exercise unwavering faith. Faith is not to hope. Faith is not simply to know God *could* do something. Faith is to know He will. And I testify to you that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are prepared to bless our students. I now leave a blessing with you.

This is my blessing: I bless you that as you exercise unwavering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, you will see mighty change multiplied in the lives of your students. As I sought the power to give this blessing I was told that many of you have already seen, often, change in your students beyond what you know is even reasonable to hope for, and so you knew the power of the Atonement was working in their lives. I bless you that you will see that magnified, both in the extent of change and in the numbers who will be touched.

I bless you in that same way in your families.

Now as I leave you that blessing, I need of course to also caution you. Teach the doctrine simply. You don’t need to give discourses on true conversion. I have tried tonight to be an example. I could have told stories of the mighty change. I chose not to do that on this occasion, although I have at other times. I tried to give to you the words that

the Lord has given us, with faith that the Holy Ghost would take them into your hearts, and that the desire to exercise your faith would come from that.

My hope would be this: not that you would speak a great deal to your students about the mighty change nor the blessing from Brother Eyring. It would be better if you simply taught with unshakable faith the simple doctrine taught so well in the Book of Mormon. Then, alone, as you kneel in prayer, in great faith, express the confidence you have in them and the love you have for them.

I have been given assurance that many will respond to the pure doctrine when it is taught in humility and with testimony and by those who themselves are feeling the effects of the Atonement in their lives.

You have seen the effects of the Atonement in your life. You don't need to speak of that to the students. They will sense it in the way you teach. They will know.

I could have told you of my own wrestles. I could have told you of my own experiences. I felt a restraining hand which seemed to say: Don't do that. Do the simple thing. Teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ, simply, clearly, from the Book of Mormon.

Bear testimony without unduly focusing on examples from your own lives, but rather, having faith that students have been prepared, and each of them will see in their

own lives the application of the scriptures that you will read with them.

I have been given that assurance, that the Holy Ghost will teach them and bear witness to them not only of what is true but of what they should do. Each will be given a different course. Each will be blessed in a different way. The Lord may not reveal to you where they are or what they must do, but He will to them. I so assure you.

I love you. The Savior loves you. There is great safety as the young people of the Church accept the gospel into their lives. There will be safety even in the times of great difficulty that are coming. There is a protection that they will have—because of the mighty change that has come in their hearts. They will choose righteousness and find that they have no more desire to do evil. That will come. It will not come in an instant, it will come over time. But you will, I promise you, in the year ahead, see miracles of strengthening among your students, and they will strengthen each other. And there will be a fortification created by the gospel of Jesus Christ through your faith and through your great efforts.

I say to you again, in the name of Jesus Christ, He loves you. He knows you. You will, in this service, feel His love. I so testify as His servant in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

THEREFORE, WHAT?

ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from an address to religious educators at a symposium on the New Testament, Brigham Young University, 8 August 2000, 3–5, 7–9

TEACHING, PREACHING, HEALING

Let me give you an example, an example that I've chosen because it also lets me say something about desired outcomes in the classroom. (I'm trying to get as much mileage out of scriptural concepts this afternoon as I can.)

We quickly and readily think of Christ as a teacher. I always have and always will. The greatest teacher who ever lived or ever will live. The New Testament is full of His teachings, His sayings, His sermons, His parables. One way or another He is a teacher on every page of that



book. But even as He taught, He was consciously doing something in addition to that, something that put teaching in perspective.

After the account of His nativity and His childhood, about which we know relatively little, we are told of Christ's baptism at the hands of John. Then He is led up into the wilderness "to be with God," not the devil. "To be with God," the Joseph Smith Translation tells us (JST, Matthew 4:1).

I pause here parenthetically and ask you and your students to be sure to pay attention to those wonderful footnotes and study aids we have in our LDS editions of the standard works. Our LDS products, the scriptures—in today's case the King James Bible for the New Testament—makes these LDS publications the best "teaching scriptures" ever produced in the history of the world. Enjoy these study aids and footnotes like the one I just cited. Now back to the story.

Following the temptations that were presented by the adversary and the Savior's successful triumph over them, Christ makes His initial call to those first disciples (not yet Apostles), and the work begins.

This is what Matthew says:

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, *teaching* in their synagogues, and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23; italics added).

Now the teaching and the preaching we know and would expect. Furthermore, we know there were miracles of every kind, healings of many of the afflicted. But I remember the first time I realized that from this earliest beginning, from the first hour, healing is mentioned as if it were a synonym for teaching and preaching. In fact, the passage being cited goes on to say more about the healing than the teaching.

Matthew continues:

“And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them” (v. 24).

What then follows is the masterful Sermon on the Mount, six and a half pages that would take six and a half years to teach properly, I suppose. But the moment that sermon is over, He comes down from the mountain and is healing again. In rapid succession He heals a leper, the centurion’s servant, Peter’s mother-in-law, then a group described only as “many that were possessed with devils” (Matthew 8:16). In short, it says, He “healed all that were sick” (v. 16).

Driven to cross the Sea of Galilee by the crowds that now swarmed around Him, He cast devils out of two who were dwelling in the Gadarene tombs, and then sailed back to “his own city” (Matthew 9:1) where He healed a man confined to bed with palsy, healed a woman with a twelve-year issue of blood (in what I think is one of the sweetest and most remarkable moments in all of the New Testament), and then raised the ruler’s daughter from the dead—only, by the way, after dismissing the sideshow-seeking audience from the room. (I wish I had the time to comment on what *that* New Testament lesson has come to mean to me in my present ministry, but that is for another day.)

Then He restored the sight of two blind men, followed by the casting out of a devil which had robbed a man of the ability to speak. That is a quick summary of the first five chapters in the New Testament devoted to Christ’s ministry. Then this verse. See if it has an echo for you:

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, *teaching* in their synagogues, and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35; italics added).

That is, of course, except for a few words, exactly the verse we read five chapters earlier. And He needs help.

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (vv. 36–38).

With that He calls the Twelve and charges them with this directive. “Go,” He says, “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

“*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give*” (Matthew 10:6–8; italics added).

Now, after taking much too much time to make this point, let me make it. We think of the Savior, we know the Savior to be, the Master Teacher. He is that and more. And when He says the bulk of the harvest yet lies before us and that there are far too few laborers, we immediately think of missionaries and others, like you, who need to teach. But the call is for a certain kind of teacher, a teacher who in the process heals.

Now let me make myself absolutely clear. It will save you a stamp on your letter to President Hinckley or a phone call. By “healing,” as I have been speaking of it, as it applies to your role in the classroom, I am *not* talking about formal use of the priesthood, or administration of the sick, or any such thing as that. That is conspicuously *not* your role as CES instructors and administrators. Are we clear on that? Indeed, one of the few ways, and they really have been only a few, that I have seen CES people get in trouble over the years is because some have not understood the distinction between your role as teachers and the role one has as a priesthood bearer holding ecclesiastical office. Now, if you promise not to be confused on that, we will go on.

I believe Christ wants our teaching to lead to healing of the spiritual kind. I cannot believe that the ten chapters we have just referenced, of only twenty-eight that Matthew wrote, could be focused so much on the context of the Savior’s ministry to distressed people, troubled people, distraught people if it were for no purpose. As with the Master, wouldn’t it be wonderful to measure the success of your teaching by the healing that takes place in the lives of your students?

Let me be a little more specific. Rather than just giving a lesson, please try a little harder to help that blind

basketball star really see, or the deaf homecoming queen really hear, or the privately lame student body president really walk. Try a little harder to fortify someone so powerfully that whatever temptations the devils of hell throw at her or him, these students will be able to withstand and thus truly in that moment be free from evil. Can you try a little harder to teach so powerfully and so spiritually that you can take that student—that boy or girl who walks alone to school and from school, who sits alone in the lunchroom, who has never had a date, who is the brunt of every joke, who weeps in the dark of the night—can you unleash the power in the scriptures and the power in the gospel and “cleanse” that leper, a leper not of his or her making, a leper made by those on our right and on our left and sometimes by us?

“THEREFORE, WHAT?”

Perhaps a lesson from contemporary life in the Quorum of the Twelve will help me say what I want to say on this point and avoid any confusion on your part. I have suggested reading for a broad view, a “big picture,” to see teachings in context. I have just used one example, not the best example, just an example. Now I want to turn that into an outcome, a teacher’s assessment.

President Boyd K. Packer, himself a master teacher and long-time administrator in the Church Educational System, has a question he often asks when we have made a presentation or given some sort of exhortation to one another in the Twelve. He looks up as if to say, “Are you through?” And then says to the speaker (and, by implication, to the rest of the group), “Therefore, what?”

“Therefore, what?” I think that is what the Savior answered day in and day out as an inseparable element of His teaching and preaching. I’ve tried to suggest that. These sermons and exhortations were to no avail if the actual lives of His disciples did not change.

“Therefore, what?” You and I know that we still have young people, and too many older ones as well, who have not made the connection between what they say they believe and how they actually live their lives. Some, certainly not all and certainly not most, but some seem to be able to come from good homes, with the boys being graded up in the priesthood, and both the girls and boys advancing through the various Church programs, sometimes getting (and here I wish to be very careful) even to the temple for missions and marriage and those sacred covenants, only to discover that almost none of what they had been taught earlier—or at least not enough of it—had been translated into true repentance and gospel living.

Again I stress that I am speaking of exceptions. But some days it seems that there are more exceptions than either

you or I or our Father in Heaven would like. So I reissue the call of the Master to have more laborers in the vineyard, not only declaring the gospel of the kingdom, but teaching in such a way that heals all manner of sickness among the people.

Pray that your teaching will bring change. Pray that, like the lyrics of a now-forgotten song, your lessons will literally cause a student to “straighten up and fly right” (Nat King Cole, “Straighten Up and Fly Right” [1943]). We want them straight and we want them right. We want them happy, happy in this life and saved in the world to come. . . .

TEACH BY THE SPIRIT

Please teach by the Holy Spirit. If we do not teach that way, then by scriptural definition we are teaching “some other way” (D&C 50:17). And any other way “is not of God” (v. 20). Give your students a spiritual experience in every way that you can. That is what the New Testament is trying to do for you. That is the message of the Gospels. It is the message of the book of Acts. It is the message of all scripture. Those spiritual experiences from those sacred records will keep your students on track and in the Church in our day just as it did in the early days of those members in New Testament times, and just as it is done in every other dispensation of time.

“The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). Not just that you won’t teach or that you can’t teach or that it will be pretty shoddy teaching. No, it is stronger than that. It is the imperative form of the verb. “Ye *shall not* teach.” Put a *thou* in there for *ye* and you have Mt. Sinai language. This is a commandment. These are God’s students, not yours, just like it was God’s Church, not Peter or Paul or Joseph or Brigham’s.

Facilitate that manifestation in the hearts of your young people, which lets them know where power, safety, and salvation really are, through the instrumentality of these our Church leaders and the blessings of Church life. Have them look to heaven for their guidance just as the eleven did that day Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives before their very eyes, just as Peter did that day when he led them in prayer to fill the vacancy in the Twelve, just as the early Saints did in seeing Brigham Young transformed before their eyes.

Let me close. I remember almost dreading (I think that’s not too strong a word) the responsibility to teach the Crucifixion, Atonement, and Resurrection in my classes because I never felt I could rise to the level of worthiness that I knew the subject deserved. I wanted so much for it to matter in the hearts of the students

and I knew if there was a weak link in the experience, it wouldn't be the student and it surely wouldn't be the Lord—it would be me.

Although I love the Savior even more now and have been called to be a witness of His name in all the world, still I feel overwhelmed and inadequate on this topic. I say that to encourage you. You as teachers will feel that some days, and often it will be the days when you want to be your best.

Take heart. Let the Spirit work in you in ways that you may not be privileged to see or even to recognize. More will go on than you think if you are honest in your heart and trying to live as purely as you can. When you get to those supreme and nearly impossible-to-teach moments of Gethsemane and Calvary and the Ascension, I would ask that you remember, among many things, two of the many applications that I would hope you would make with your students.

CHRIST REMAINED TRUE

Remind the students, and there is so much else to say, but remind the students that in this unspeakably wrenching and nature-shattering pain, *Christ remained true*.

Matthew said He was “sorrowful and very heavy . . . exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matthew 26:37–38). He went alone into the garden, intentionally left the Brethren outside to wait. He had to do this alone. He dropped to His knees and then, the Apostle says, He “fell on his face” (v. 39). Luke says He was “in an agony” and prayed so earnestly His sweat became “great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). Mark says He fell and cried, “Abba, Father” (Mark 14:36). *Papa*, we would say, or *Daddy*. This is not abstract theology now. This is a Boy pleading with His Dad. “Abba [Daddy, Papa] . . . all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me.”

Who could resist that? God in His heavens—in His righteousness, for this, His only perfect child—who could resist? “You can do anything. I know you can do anything. Take this cup from me.”

That whole prayer, Mark noted, had been that if it were possible, this hour would be stricken from the plan. He says, in effect, “If there is another path, I would rather walk it. If there is any other way—any other way—I will gladly embrace it.” “Let this cup pass from me,” Matthew says (Matthew 26:39). “Remove this cup from me,” says Luke (Luke 22:42). But in the end the cup does not pass.

Then He said and did that which most characterizes His life in time and in eternity, the words and the act that made Jesus the Son of God, according to the great Book

of Mormon prophet Abinadi. He said and did what He had to do to become the Son (with a capital *S*) of God. He yielded to the will of His Father and said, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (v. 42). That is, for all intents and purposes, the last moment in the divine conversation between Father and Son in Jesus’ mortal ministry. From there on the die has been cast. He will see it through no matter what.

And from that last declaration in the Old World we get this first declaration in the New. To the Nephites gathered at the temple, He would say, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, . . . the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and . . . I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning” (3 Nephi 11:11). That is His own introduction of Himself, the declaration He feels best tells us who He is.

If you can leave your students one element of commitment in response to the Savior’s incomparable sacrifice for them, His payment for their transgressions, His sorrow for their sins, try to help them see the necessity to obey—to, in their own difficult domain and hours of decision, yield, to suffer “the will of the Father” (v. 11), whatever the cost. They won’t always do that, any better than you and I have been able to do it, but that ought to be their goal; that ought to be their aim. The thing Christ seems most anxious to stress about His mission—beyond the personal virtues and beyond the magnificent sermons and even beyond the healing, is that He submitted His will to the will of the Father.

We are all willful people, maybe too much of the time. Certainly your students can be willful as they test the water, test the limits, test their faith and the Church, and often enough, your faith. But the message for every one of us and every one of them is that our offering, in similitude of His offering, is a broken heart and a contrite spirit. We must break out of our petty selves and weep for our sins and for the sins of the world. Plead with your students to yield to the Father, to yield to the Son, to yield to the Holy Spirit. There is no other way. Without likening ourselves to Him too much, because that would be sacrilegious to do, nevertheless that symbol of the cup that cannot pass is a cup that comes in our life as well as in His. It is in a much lesser way, to a much lesser degree, but it comes often enough to teach us that we have to obey.

CHRIST KNOWS THE WAY

The second lesson of the Atonement that I would ask you to remember for and with your students is related. If your students feel that they have somehow made too many mistakes already, if they feel they have turned their back on the principle of obedience one too many times, if they feel that they work and live and labor lower than the light

of Christ can shine, teach them, as the Prophet Joseph shared with the Saints, that God has “a forgiving disposition,” that Christ is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 42). Mercy, with its sister virtues of repentance and forgiveness, is at the very heart of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Everything in the gospel teaches us that we can change if we really want to, that we can be helped if we truly ask for it, that we can be made whole, whatever the problems of the past.

In spite of life’s tribulations and as fearful as some of their prospects are, there is help for your students on this journey. When Christ bids them to yield, to submit, to obey the Father, He knows how to help us do that. He has walked that way, asking them to do what He has done. He has made it safer. He has made it very much easier for their travel and ours. He knows where the sharp stones and the stumbling blocks lie and where the thorns and the thistles are the most severe. He knows where the path is perilous, and He knows which way to go when the road forks and nightfall comes. He knows this because He has suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind . . . that he may know . . . how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12). *To succor* means “to run to.” Testify to your students that Christ will run to them, and is running even now, if they will but receive the extended arm of His mercy.

To those who stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end He is there to save us, and for all this He gave His life. However dim our days or your students’ days may seem, they have been a lot darker for the Savior of the world. As a reminder of those days, Jesus has chosen, even in a resurrected, otherwise perfected body, to retain for the benefit of

His disciples the wounds in His hands and in His feet and in His side—signs, if you will, that painful things happen even to the pure and the perfect; signs, if you will, that pain in this world is *not* evidence that God doesn’t love you; signs, if you will, that problems pass and happiness can be ours. Remind your students that it is the wounded Christ who is the Captain of our souls, He who yet bears the scars of our forgiveness, the lesions of His love and humility, the torn flesh of obedience and sacrifice.

These wounds are the principal way we are to recognize Him when He comes. He may invite us forward, as He has invited others, to see and to feel those marks. If not before, then surely at that time, we will remember with Isaiah that it was for us that a God was “despised and rejected . . . ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” that “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:3, 5).

I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I testify that He is perfect, one with His Father in every thought, every virtue, every deed, every desire. I testify that His is the greatest life ever lived and that in His name only is salvation. I testify that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son as he was carried through the veil by the Holy Spirit. I testify that these divine beings, the Godhead, lead and direct this Church still, and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is their prophet in word and in deed in every way in the current hour.

I love you and I love this work. I love your students, and I envy your opportunity to immerse yourselves this year in the majestic New Testament and in the life of Him of whom it testifies.

“A STANDARD UNTO MY PEOPLE”

**ELDER JEFFREY R.
HOLLAND**
**OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES**

*Excerpt from an address to
religious educators at a
symposium on the Book of
Mormon, Brigham Young
University, 9 August 1994, 13–15*

No discussion of Christ in the Book of Mormon would be complete without at least some reference to the remarkable material in 3 Nephi.



There is so much there that is *so* exciting. Let me just share one insight which is probably commonplace to you.

As the Savior comes to the end of that remarkable first day visiting the Nephites, he says, noting that they are weary and that he needs to leave them for a time, “Prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again” (3 Nephi 17:3). Then, to stress that he wasn’t leaving for just any casual reason, he mentions his assignment: “Now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them” (3 Nephi 17:4). Obviously, duty had great call upon him at that moment.

But then he casts his eyes around the multitude and the tears in *their* eyes speak volumes, pleading for him to tarry

just a little longer with them. Moved with compassion and without a word spoken, he yields, inviting them to bring forward their sick, their lame, their blind, leprous, withered and deaf, all to be healed at his hand according to their faith and the will of the Father. As miraculous and moving as all that must have been, it is only a prelude to the stunning experience he then has with the children, over whom he weeps, blessing them one by one. Angels . . . descend out of heaven in the midst of holy fire and circle round about the children, ministering unto them in glory and grandeur.

What then follows in this saga of spontaneous spiritual majesty is then the institution of the sacrament, with all the sacred significance *that* has.

So we have come through powerful doctrines, overwhelming declarations from the lips of the Son of God himself. We have had our first day with him—from 3 Nephi 11 to 3 Nephi 18—personally feeling the wounds in his flesh, hearing the sermon at the temple, learning about the covenant, seeing fiery manifestations of angels, capped by the institution of the sacrament.

And then we have this counsel, what I believe is intended to be the jewel in the crown of a day filled with incomparable jewels. At this zenith of the first day, as the sacrament of the Lord's supper is being administered, we get this glistening diamond, this very simple, clear imperative. To the Nephite Twelve he says:

"I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him.

"And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church, among my people who do repent and are baptized in my name. *Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you*" (3 Nephi 18:15–16; emphasis added).

Then, turning away from the Twelve, he speaks to the multitude: "Behold, verily, verily, I say unto *you, ye* must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (3 Nephi 18:18; emphasis added). Then he invites all of them to pray in their families, to pray for those investigating the Church—a great sweeping invitation about how broadly we should pray, followed by these words: "Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. *Behold I am the light which you shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed*" (3 Nephi 18:24; emphasis added).

And indeed they have witnessed Christ at prayer:

"He prayed unto the Father, *and the things which he prayed cannot be written*, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.

"And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father;

"And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father" (3 Nephi 17:15–17; emphasis added).

I can hardly imagine what it might be like to *hear* the Savior pray, but I cannot even comprehend what is meant when they say, "No tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive" what they *saw* the Savior pray. It's one thing to *hear* a prayer. It's surely something altogether more to *see* one.

What *did* they see? Well, it can't be written. But suffice it to say that this is the great, consummate, concluding example he sets for those people that day, the crowning jewel, the post-sacramental counsel given to the Twelve and all others who would take up the cross and follow him—*they must pray*, and pray always.

They must pray individually and as families. They must pray for the newest member and the littlest child and the most senior citizen among them. They must pray for those still in the world, those who do not yet have the truth. They must pray for everyone, including their enemies and those who spitefully use and persecute them. *This* is the light that they are to hold up. This is the evidence they will give of their faith in their Heavenly Father.

Prayer is worship in its simplest and most powerful form, as the unknown Zenos taught (see Alma 33:3). It is "the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or unexpressed" ("Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire," *Hymns*, no. 145). "Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which you shall hold up—that which you have seen me do. *Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed*" (3 Nephi 18:24; emphasis added).

The praying Christ. That is the example to which we are to point others. The Christ of humility. The Christ of spiritual communion. The Christ who is dependent upon his Father. The Christ who asks for blessings upon others. The Christ who calls down the powers of heaven. The Christ who is one with the Father in at least one way that we too can be united with him—through prayer.

Of the many aspects of his life that you teach your students, be absolutely certain you teach them of the praying Christ. Along with putting the scriptures in their

hands, there is no more certain help you can give them in this difficult world in which they live and in the increasingly destructive times which they will face. Hold up that light to them—Christ seeking the guidance and support and protection of the Father. Christ submitting, kneeling, yielding, obeying the will of his Heavenly Father. That is the light we are to show the world and you are to show your students. It is the image of Christ praying unspeakable things.

Give your students this promise, as Christ gave it to the Nephite multitude: “And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 18:20). They need to believe that. And they will if you believe it.

My concluding testimony tonight is that of Moroni’s, surely the loneliest voice in scriptural history. In his isolation, Moroni becomes something of three witnesses in one, speaking to us three times, as it were, in final declaration of the Savior and of this messianic testament for which he will be the last author. His first witness is his conclusion to his father’s book, comprising chapters eight and nine of that text. One passage of scripture in that sequence about Christ blessed me at a crucial moment in my life more powerfully and more dramatically than has any other verse of scripture anywhere in the standard works. I will love Moroni forever for that one experience alone, if for no other reason—and there are lots of other reasons.

Moroni’s second witness comes with the book of Ether—his own comments in that book, following that singular, unparalleled experience of the brother of Jared. Those twenty-eight verses in the third chapter of Ether may well be the single most remarkable encounter with Christ ever experienced by mortal man in this world, and we are indebted to Moroni for preserving it. And what a lesson in meekness that such an unprecedented revelation coming to one of such unparalleled faith does not even give us the name of the prophet to whom it came. What a stunning, silent declaration to a world nearly drowning in a sea of egotism and self-centeredness.

Moroni’s third and final testimony comes in his own concluding book, emphasizing faith in Christ, hope in Christ, the charity of Christ, with the prayer that these three great Christian virtues, these three consummate

Christian principles, will lead us to purity: “Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, . . . that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; *that when he shall appear we shall be like him*, for we shall see him as he is; . . . that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48; emphasis added).

My prayer for you and for your students this year is Moroni’s prayer, as taught by his Father—a prayer for purity—the purity of Christ—coming to us from our faith and our hope and our charity. May we see him as he is and be like him when he comes. May we be purified as he is pure.

“Come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the . . . unclean thing. . . .

“Yea come unto Christ, and be perfected in him. . . .

“And . . . if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot” (Moroni 10:30, 32–33).

That final, last, lonely appeal of the keystone of our religion and the most correct book ever written is to touch not the unclean thing; it is to be holy and without spot; it is to be pure. And that purity can come only through the blood of that Lamb who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, the Lamb who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the Lamb who was despised and afflicted, but whom we esteemed not (see Mosiah 14).

But for all that we have placed on him, and in spite of stripes he should not have had to bear, and though our sins and our stupidity be as scarlet, yet we can be made “white as snow” (see Isaiah 1:18).

“[Who] are these . . . arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . .

“ . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:13–14).

Purity—through the blood of the Lamb. That is what this book pleads for, and that is what I pray you will help your students to pursue. Such is God’s covenant. Such is Christ’s mission. Such is our privilege and our duty and our unmerited opportunity.

THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME

ELDER VAUGHN J.
FEATHERSTONE
OF THE SEVENTY

Excerpt from Brigham Young University 2000–2001 Speeches (2001), 171–73, 180



There is a scripture to which President Howard W. Hunter referred during the training of General Authorities at October conference 1992. I have written that statement in my scriptures in the margin. This is the scripture from Jeremiah 31:31–34:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; . . .

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

It is my conviction that most of you will live to see that day. How can the great Jehovah put His law in our inward parts and write it in our hearts? Why will there no longer be a need to teach our neighbors? Why will He forgive our iniquity?

A year ago this coming April, President Packer, who, along with the Twelve Apostles, is responsible for the training of all of the General and Area Authorities, gave us counsel and direction that will lead to the fulfillment of the quote from Jeremiah. The training was the deepest and most meaningful of any I have experienced in my 29 years as a General Authority. It changed my life and, I would assume, the lives of all the Brethren. President Packer is a divine seer. He took the necessary preparation time and made the total effort required by the Lord to receive the direction necessary from the Lord. He read the books on Christ by Frederic William Farrar, possibly the most accurate biblical scholar outside of the Church. It is he and his writings that Elder James E. Talmage quotes in *Jesus the Christ*. Elder Bruce R. McConkie

referred to his works often. President Packer read *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, which I also picked up and read. The humiliation, suffering, and horror of the early Christians and the cruelty of the protesters is beyond our ability to comprehend. Most of the Christians were burned at the stake, had their flesh torn from them, were buried alive, or were put in dens with half-starved lions or tigers. These early Christians suffered the deepest, most penetrating pain possible, and almost to their dying breath called out to Jesus. It was as though they could already see Him. As I read stories of hundreds who suffered those horrific experiences, I wondered, and I hoped that if I were ever to be put in similar circumstances that I would suffer in the wonderful dignified way they did. I hope I would be strong enough to do that.

President Packer read *Jesus the Christ* again. He read every scripture about the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of God in the standard works. He pondered and prayed, and the revelation came. I am convinced it was not just to be lodged in the hearts of the Brethren but is revelation for the whole Church. I believe as General Authorities we are under the sacred and holy obligation to take the message to the Church. I believe you will hear more on this inspired subject in the days, months, and years ahead that will help and bless this Church more than anything else.

President Packer's message was that we must live worthy to have the Holy Ghost with us 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the rest of our lives. This was not a message for us only; it is a message for every member of the Church. Can you imagine what would happen if every man, woman, youth, and child lived in such a way as to qualify? We would startle the world. Imagine 11 million members of the Church now, and then 20, 50, 80, and 100 million in the future having the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

It is my belief that President Howard W. Hunter, quoting that wonderful scripture in Jeremiah, knew that in a future day not many years off President Packer would help us qualify for the fulfillment of this wonderful blessing.

The second revelation of absolute and profound importance came as he and the Twelve encouraged us to testify of the Living Christ. You have read the declaration of the Living Christ by President Hinckley, his counselors, and the Quorum of the Twelve. How often do we testify of the things we hold most precious and dear in this life? For some it may be occasionally—i.e., once a year or once in a while when we are called upon to speak or in a testimony meeting. We are true disciples of Christ; we ought to testify every day in every Latter-day Saint home to our wives/husbands, siblings, and children. These are

the people we should love most on this earth. These are those we want to know the truth of this mighty work. Opportunities will come at school, in our work, and in the community to testify to our friends and neighbors not of our faith in a humble and sweet way, as well as to testify to each other and build greater faith.

For example, a son may say to us, “I sure think President Hinckley is a good man.”

We could say, “Indeed, he is wonderful.”

What if instead we said, “Son, I know he is a prophet of God, a seer, and a revelator. He may be one of the greatest prophets that ever lived.”

Can you see the difference? Can you feel the difference?

A daughter might say, “We have a nice bishop.”

We could respond, “Yes, sweetheart, he is.”

What if we took this opportunity to say, “Sweetheart, he was called by God by revelation. He has the mantle upon him, and he is guided by inspiration in his calling.”

Children need to hear their parents testify. Siblings can strengthen each other, and their friends can be lifted spiritually.

Can you think of anything in this generation that would affect members of the Church more than living to be worthy of the Holy Ghost constantly and testifying as guided and directed by the Holy Ghost of the truth of this great, majestic, divine work and more especially of Him whose work this is?

This is how we will put His law in our inward parts, and it will be written in our hearts. It is how our iniquity will be forgiven. Of course, when we live worthy of the Holy Ghost, it will have required repentance, submission, and meekness. Then we will have qualified, and then the Holy Ghost will inspire us to testify and forgiveness will come.

Section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants teaches us the reality of the possibility for every worthy member of this Church:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my

name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. [D&C 93:1]

The Savior said “every soul,” not just the Brethren or specially privileged souls—every soul. Can you comprehend the power that would surge through the Church if every soul sought to seek the face of Christ and know that He is? Remember, the Lord’s promises are sure.

In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord counsels us in this powerful declaration:

What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same. [D&C 1:38]

In D&C 18:36 the Lord teaches, “Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice.” If ever I have heard the Lord’s voice, it is in the declaration from D&C 1. There is a witness that penetrates my heart and soul that what the Lord states is truth. Like Jeremiah, I thrill that “his word [is] in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones” (Jeremiah 20:9).

This is the time to make a sacred resolution to follow the apostles and the prophets, to seek the Holy Ghost, and to testify and qualify to see the Master’s face.

It has been my experience that fasting, prayer, study, and pondering are essential. Equally important is service. We must follow the pattern Christ modeled for us. . . .

It is my testimony that the Holy Ghost and testifying should be our foundation pillars of direction as we move into the new millennium. Along with the prophet Job, I say, These are things I understand not that were “too wonderful for me.”

We belong to a wonderful and magnificent church. I bear my solemn and absolute witness that the Book of Mormon is true, that Christ is the Savior of the world, that this church is His true and living church, that God our Father is the Lord Omnipotent, that we are His children, that He loves us and answers our prayers, however humble. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

TEACHING BY FAITH

ELDER ROBERT D. HALES OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

*Excerpt from An Evening with
Elder Robert D. Hales,
1 February 2002, 2–5, 7*



BE AS A LITTLE CHILD

A couple of months ago I had an opportunity to go to church in a ward in Palm Springs, California. The Primary president had a dilemma; one of the teachers was not there. As I was leaving the building I saw that there were two classes together without a teacher. I went into Primary to say hello to them. A young lady returned missionary was recruited to teach the class, but I was touched when the children asked me as I was ready to leave: “Aren’t you going to stay? Aren’t you going to teach us?” I saw almost a pleading in their eyes, and I melted.

I felt a little of what the Savior must have felt when parents “brought young children to him, that he should touch them” and pray for them, “and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

“But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:13–14; see also Matthew 19:13–14).

I said, “Because you have asked me, because you want me, I will stay and be your teacher.” The young teacher was in agreement with the class. They were young eight- to eleven-year-old children, but they asked some remarkably insightful questions. For example, one beautiful little girl asked, “What are you doing to be a good Apostle?” Her question brought tears to my eyes.

I answered: “I am trying to be just like you, a little child. Don’t ever change. I have spent my life striving to be just like Jesus said, to be ‘as a little child.’” I taught them from 3 Nephi: “Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

“Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God” (3 Nephi 9:21–22; see also 3 Nephi 11:37; D&C 99:3).

Most children are believing, kind, without prejudices or faults; they are pure, sweet, and humble, willing to take direction.

The Spirit was touching their hearts and mine. I said: “As we get older we sometimes forget this sweetness of being

a child and believing as you do now. Let’s always remember this time together and what we are experiencing with the Spirit with us. Come back to it, hold on to it, and never lose it.”

The children made laserlike comments and asked intriguing questions. I could see the commitment they were making, especially on the faces of one girl and two boys—their testimony and sincerity were so visible.

I taught them about Jesus’ visit to the Americas. They asked what Jesus was like in the spirit world and what He would be like when He comes again. I read to them:

“And he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again;

“And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

“And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them” (3 Nephi 17:21–24).

The youth in our classes are precious children of our Heavenly Father.

Elder David B. Haight happened to be in Palm Springs at the same time, and he went to the meeting that followed the one I was leaving. As he entered the parking lot, he met a family—parents and a young Primary child. The parents said, “Elder Hales has just taught our son.” Elder Haight said to me, “That boy was aglow.”

When we teach by the Spirit, the open heart receives the Spirit. “For the preacher was not better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal” (Alma 1:26).

Both they and I learned by the Spirit. It is no different in our seminary and institute classes.

We cannot forget the importance of faith. Teaching by the Spirit is really an exercise in faith. For every concept that we teach and everything of which we testify we need to rely on the Holy Ghost, that we may touch the hearts of those for whom we have responsibility. We teach by faith; we teach by the Spirit; we boldly declare our testimony.

One of the great concerns we have with our youth is the fact that many attend seminary and institute but do not apply the teachings they receive in their lives—to go to the temple for their endowments and to be sealed when they have the opportunity for a temple marriage.

We need your help to encourage your students to apply gospel principles in their daily lives. As we encourage youth to apply seminary and institute teachings in their daily activities, it will strengthen their testimonies and spiritual development. . . .

APPLY GOSPEL PRINCIPLES

My concern is that there is a difference between what our youth *know* about the gospel as opposed to what they *do* to apply gospel principles in the conduct of their lives.

This is where we as teachers are very important in the lives of our students. In many cases we have to teach our students the best way for them to learn the facts they need to know to advance their learning and gain knowledge.

As teachers, we must require our students to think. I will never forget the lessons I learned from a Sunday School teacher when I was about ten years old. For Christmas we were given a large card that had small, individual booklets inside, each with a story from the Bible—David and Goliath, the Creation, Daniel and the lion’s den. There was a long series of wonderful Bible stories. We read each one at home and came to class prepared to discuss them. I can remember those teaching moments vividly to this day.

After discussing each story, we were asked questions such as “What does that mean to you?” “How does this scripture—or story or principle—relate to your life?” “How can you apply this teaching in your home?” “How do you feel about it?” I found in my own home with my boys that once I asked these questions they began to live and feel what they were being taught.

We were asked to think. We were not learning the stories only. We were discovering how we could apply them in our lives. My teacher was planting the seed of faith and helping it grow within each of us.

We teach the scriptures in story form, and we need to apply them in the lives of these young people where they can be more effective. Our youth have to be able to recall stories and the truths of the gospel principles in their lives when they need them the most.

John Greenleaf Whittier eloquently wrote, “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, / The saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’” (“Maud Muller,” *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* [1894], 48).

There is nothing more tragic than for a person to look back at what might have been. Nor do we want those we teach to go through life without knowing that they are a child of God, knowing the plan of salvation, and knowing why they are on this earth, who they are, and how to conduct their lives. If they realize this great plan, they can endure all of the

tests of life, deflect the fiery darts of the adversary, endure to the end, and gain the final rewards of the plan of happiness.

Teach the importance and power of pondering; provide time in class to ponder, to think and to exchange ideas. Use practical application: “What does that mean to you?” Ponder and pray. Ask students to write the thoughts and impressions given to them and what they are feeling. Faith promoting incidents occur in teaching when students take a role in teaching and testifying to their peers. It is very important to have open discussion about the importance of prayer and scripture study so that the youth can help one another and be supportive.

It is a process. Allow them to emerge in the time they are with you. We need to give them the ability to learn from the mistakes of others, such as an older brother or sister or maybe a friend, and give them examples from the scriptures, so they don’t have to go through each mistake themselves. The scriptures tell all of the things that happen when we are not obedient. Our students don’t have to repeat the mistakes and endure the pain.

Learning for some people comes with more difficulty than for others. This aspect of learning requires teachers who know their students and their learning ability. Great teachers know not only the subject they are teaching but, just as importantly, understand the needs of their students. Great students learn from their teachers, are willing to take correction, and express gratitude for a teacher’s caring counsel. You, as great teachers, teach students who they are and motivate them to fulfill their potential for eternal salvation.

Get to know what is happening in the lives of the students. We have to know of their concerns and what they are facing—why they act the way they do and why they say the things they say.

Recognize when a student is ready to use his or her agency and have the strength to make decisions. Part of the teaching process is to give our students a foreshadowing to help them prepare for the challenges they are going to have to meet in the future.

Wouldn’t we all like to avoid the tests and trials of this mortal probation?

Achilles, one of the great heroes of Greek mythology, was the hero of Homer’s *Iliad*.

In addition to Homer’s account of Achilles, later authors developed fables or folklore about Achilles and his mother, Thetis.

According to some accounts, Thetis endeavored to make Achilles immortal by dipping him in the River Styx. She

succeeded in making Achilles invulnerable, with the exception of his heel by which she held him.

Achilles grew up to be invincible, a warrior of great strength, leading the Greek army against Troy in full armor.

The death of Achilles is mentioned in the *Odyssey*. He is said by later writers to have been killed by an arrow of Paris directed by Apollo to his only vulnerability—his heel.

Wouldn't every parent or every CES teacher like to find the secret of protecting their children, making them invulnerable to the fiery darts of the adversary?

Unfortunately, we cannot protect our children from the slings and arrows of mortality. Our challenges, learning experiences, and opposition are meant to strengthen us, not defeat us or destroy us.

DEVELOP FAITH TO PREPARE FOR LIFE'S STORMS

How important it is during troubled times, when we are tested, that we do not do anything to lose the Holy Ghost's gentle persuasions, comfort, peace, and direction. This peace will give us assurance to make the correct choices in life in order to weather the storms and bring us closer to God's ways.

It is our job to help our students prepare to make the weighty decisions so that when challenges come, they will choose wisely. Knowing that they have their agency and that there is "opposition in all things" (see 2 Nephi 2:11), our objective is to help them take upon themselves the "whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11, 13; see also D&C 27:15) so that they will be able to withstand the "fiery darts of the adversary" (1 Nephi 15:24; D&C 3:8; see also Ephesians 6:16) with the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17; see also D&C 27:18) and the "shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:16; D&C 27:17) to endure to the end and be worthy to stand and live in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ for all the eternities.

There are many examples in the scriptures of those who learned these lessons well and listened to the still, small voice of warning. Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife. The Savior and his family were told to flee. Lehi and his family were also told to flee. Our students must learn that they cannot stay around in an evil situation. Too often I have seen young people think they could stand with one foot in Babylon.

As CES teachers, we want nothing more for our students than for them to succeed. Sometimes we want it so badly we try to *will* it to happen. We are familiar with the hymn that says:

*Know this, that ev'ry soul is free
To choose his life and what he'll be;
For this eternal truth is giv'n:
That God will force no man to heav'n.*

*He'll call, persuade, direct aright,
And bless with wisdom, love, and light,
In nameless ways be good and kind,
But never force the human mind.*

("Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240.)

We cannot *will* faith in our children. Faith comes from the inside based upon our desire to receive it and to exercise it in our lives, that through the Spirit we will have abiding faith and show it in our actions.

So often we try to bring someone into the gospel by our desire. That may be very important in the initial phases. But a true teacher, once he has taught the facts and the students gain the knowledge, takes them a step further to gain the spiritual witness and the understanding in their hearts that brings about the action and the doing.

This is what we have to do in measuring each day in the classroom with our questions and discussions. We must be doing our best to measure where each student is on that road to faith. . . .

Faith is a gift of God. As we seek for faith, it will be granted unto us. Then we can teach others how to gain faith and have that faith with us always. Faith comes through our obedience to living laws and ordinances. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17).

May the Lord's choicest blessings be with you as you teach and testify of this great work to influence the next generation of Saints and parents. May you have the Spirit attend you to discern the spiritual needs of your students as they prepare themselves to live in this world and not be of the world. May you listen to their pleas for guidance and be the role models by the example of conduct in your lives.

I pray for you in your teaching labors to impress upon the youth that they are indeed children of God. May the blessings attend you in your families to love, care, and lead them in righteousness.

We give gratitude for your devoted and dedicated service. For as you live the gospel in your lives and homes, so will you teach by the Spirit of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

AN ATTITUDE: THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS

ELDER MARION D. HANKS OF THE SEVENTY

Excerpt from Ensign, July 1981, 70

Don't be unwilling to say, "I do not know," because in truth there is much we do not know. Teach principles that have consequence in salvation. Avoid judging the faith of others on the basis of our own



strong personal opinions in matters that may not, in fact, significantly relate to salvation.

It is of great consequence for us to know that God created man and that he created the earth. Is it of equal importance to know the method or methods and the time involved? I do not think so. I know that God created the earth and I know why.

BY THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Excerpt from mission presidents' seminar, 3 April 1985, 2, 4

Our theme is taken from the Doctrine and Covenants section 50, verse 21. The brief sentence of twenty-one words is like a window. It will open to the whole universe and admit a world of light: "He that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth."

Listen carefully to the setting for those twenty-one words: "Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained?"



"To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth." . . .

All of the instruction you will receive recognizes the fact that when conversion takes place, it is through the power of the Spirit. In order to succeed in missionary work, these three things must occur:

We must understand what an investigator must feel in order to receive conversion.

We must understand how a missionary must feel in order to teach with the converting power of the Spirit.

And then we must understand how a member must feel to succeed in participating in the conversion experience.

Once we understand that, every detail of our administration and teaching should be directed toward preparing a climate where those feelings can be planted deeply enough so that investigators will accept baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

THE LORD WILL MULTIPLY THE HARVEST

ELDER HENRY B. EYRING OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

An Evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, 6 February 1998

I am grateful to be with you tonight. This is called "An Evening with a General Authority." For me it is an evening with friends. Many are gathered in this historic Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.



Even more of you have joined this grand assembly from locations across the land, made possible by the miraculous outpouring of electronic innovation, a miracle which is accelerating. That outpouring is evidence of the intent of the Lord to accelerate his work in the earth. He, in his loving kindness, is multiplying the power available to us to do the work to which we are called, which is to offer to the children of our Heavenly Father the opportunity to choose eternal life.

On an evening in February, you may well be feeling a little discouragement about how hard it seems to be to lead young people to choose eternal life. In your class today or yesterday, you searched the faces and watched

the body language of your students, looking for some sign that the gospel was going down into their hearts and into their lives. This is that part of the school year, midway through when the mornings are dark, at least in this hemisphere, where you may find yourself pulling out an old letter of thanks from a student or trying to remember a conversation after class which let you know that a life was changed for the better. All of us yearn—sometimes we ache—to see evidence that our efforts and our sacrifice somehow add to the Lord’s harvest of souls.

There are reasons for us to have not only hope but overwhelming gratitude. Far more than the modern technical miracles the Lord is granting to us, he has from the beginning put powerful tools in place to multiply the results of our efforts to build up the kingdom of God. Tonight I will speak about a few of them. From what I say you may think of yet others. The ones I will mention are simple and so common that they may be ignored and their power easily overlooked.

My purpose is to give us confidence that we can, by doing small things, expect a great harvest because of the preparations which the Lord has made to magnify the results of our work. And by speaking of those preparations we can make it more likely that we will do the little things which will bring a multiplication of the harvest, just as the Lord promised some of his servants as recorded in section 104 of the Doctrine and Covenants: “And, inasmuch as they are faithful, I will multiply blessings upon them and their seed after them, even a multiplicity of blessings” (v. 33).

The words of that promise remind us of one way he has prepared for the great harvest from your efforts. It is a principle put in place before the creation of the world and to last through the eternities. It is this: the Lord operates through families. When a blessing is pronounced upon not only a person but the generations to follow, there is an endless increase of blessings. Just that simple idea has changed the way I see my students and even the way I see you tonight. We teach students who will be the fathers and the mothers of generations. They not only *may* be the teachers of their children, they are commanded to be. We are blessed to teach our students for a few hours in a week. Parents may, if they choose, teach their children many hours each day during their tender years, long before the ages when we are blessed to teach them, when the heart and soul can be touched more easily and pointed toward eternal life.

Now, we might wonder whether they can safely copy the way we teach when they become parents and are teaching in the sacred confines of those future homes of theirs. We, as teachers, have different responsibilities and limitations than will be theirs as parents. Yet I have

come to know that not only will they use our teaching as a model but that they can do so with confidence. The principles by which we are to teach will apply with equal power in the home. Our careful study and application of those principles will bless the lives of generations of families.

FOLLOW THE CHARTED COURSE

The place I would always begin, to be sure I knew what those principles are, would be to read President J. Reuben Clark Jr.’s talk “The Charted Course of the Church in Education.” He gave it sixty years ago to a few teachers at Aspen Grove, a part of Brigham Young University. He saw our time and beyond, with prophetic insight. The principles he taught, of how to see our students and thus how to teach them, will always apply in our classrooms and in the homes and families of our students and even the children of our students. Here are principles, statements of fact, from that address by President J. Reuben Clark:

“The youth of the Church, your students, are in great majority sound in thought and in spirit. The problem primarily is to keep them sound, not to convert them.

“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” (*The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. [1994], 3).

Later in the talk he made clear the principles of teaching which must necessarily flow from that description of our students. He said:

“I have already indicated that our youth are not children spiritually; they are well on toward the normal spiritual maturity of the world. To treat them as children spiritually, as the world might treat the same age group, is therefore and likewise an anachronism. I say once more, 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. 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, in their natural guise. Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches, for ‘bedtime’ stories, for coddling, for patronizing, or for any of the other childish devices used in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperienced and all but spiritually dead” (*Charted Course*, 9).

As we listen to that optimistic description of youth, we might well wonder if the great growth in the Church since 1938 might change the principle that we should teach spiritual things directly because youth are hungry for them. The young people in the seminary and institute of religion classes in that day, President Clark's day, were primarily second or third generation Latter-day Saints, born in the covenant. Today, 67 percent of the Church came in as converts. Of those converts, 60 percent are between fourteen and twenty-five years of age, the very ages where they are invited to our classrooms. Converts will increasingly be our students.

The great change in our classrooms, as the kingdom goes forth to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, will only verify the prophetic vision of President Clark. More and more, our students will have chosen in recent years and even in recent weeks to make sacred covenants in the waters of baptism. They will have received by the laying on of hands by those with authority from God the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. They will remember that moment. They will be hungry for the things of the Spirit. They will recognize when the truth is confirmed to them by the Spirit. They will be eager to have their testimonies deepened by feeling the fire of our testimonies of the fundamental truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Just as our students will more and more be the young people President Clark described, so also will the children who will come into the families of our students be. The last time you sat down with a child and read a scripture or taught a family home evening lesson, you saw and felt in them what President Clark described. They were hungry for things of the Spirit. And they recognized spiritual truth, sometimes as if they knew more than you were telling them. The principles described so many years ago will be a sure guide in the years ahead, both in our classrooms and in the homes of our students and their posterity.

That makes it all the more crucial that we study and then follow in faith the principles which are to guide us. Here are some of them, in language we cannot misunderstand from President Clark:

"You do have an interest in matters purely cultural and in matters of purely secular knowledge, but, I repeat again for emphasis, 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 not, whether high or low, to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you to be. To do so would be to have as many different churches as we have seminaries—and that is chaos.

"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 Lord has declared that he is 'the same yesterday, today, and forever'" (*Charted Course*, 10).

Now, from that instruction, we are to teach spiritually hungry students, as directly as we can, the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is declared in the standard works and by the living prophets. In the main, we are doing that well—very well. And yet the greatness of our responsibility and our opportunity demands that we ask whether we could do better. Common sense and doctrine give us the answer. We *can* do better. As you would expect, President Brigham Young spoke about that. Can you hear his voice?

"Improvement belongs to the spirit and plan of the heavens. To improve in our minds, to increase in wisdom, knowledge and understanding, to gather every item of knowledge that we can in mechanism and in science of every description, respecting the earth, the object of the organization of the earth, the heavens, the heavenly bodies—all this is of Heaven, it is from God; but when a person or a people begin to dwindle, to lessen and to take the downward course, they are going from heaven and heavenly things" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 78).

SMALL CHANGES IN THINGS WE DO OFTEN

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 improvement.

Now, because of that I will suggest three tools which most of us use, or decide not to use, every time we teach. A small change for the better in any or all of them could bring a multiplication in the harvest, which is the desire of our hearts. The first is the devotional. The second is the curriculum. And the third is the asking and the answering of questions.

Now, I need to tell a little bit about the way I would look for the small changes—the little improvements I could make. I would follow the principles taught by President Clark. He told us that our students are spiritually hungry and we are to help them be fed. The only way they can be fed is for the Holy Spirit to confirm and expand the truths of the gospel that we teach. And the Lord has told us how to be sure that will happen. One place in scripture which makes that clear to me is in the sixth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses. The Lord described a process which

our students will know was true for Oliver Cowdery, will be true for them, and will be true for their children:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, blessed art thou for what thou hast done; for thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit. If it had not been so, thou wouldst not have come to the place where thou art at this time.

“Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind; and now I tell thee these things that thou mayest know that thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of truth.”

I take that statement as true doctrine and simple instruction. The small changes I would look for are those which would increase the likelihood that a person I was teaching would inquire of God in faith. That will surely, every time, bring enlightenment by the Spirit. And that is the feeding we seek for those we teach. That will help us find improvements we might consider in everything we do regularly as we teach.

THE DEVOTIONAL

The devotional, as an example, provides an opportunity to apply the principle. For most of us a devotional might include music, prayer, and a spiritual thought—often in that order.

The hymns of Zion invite the Holy Ghost into the room. So, whenever we can, we sing. There is a casual way to do it and a careful way. The careful way is to think ahead to what the lesson will be for a particular day, to find the central idea which we wish the students to come to know is true, and then to ask a student to select a hymn which will help make that happen. That will not seem a small thing to the young person who is asked, when they sense that we really need their help. Done carefully enough, our invitation may lead them to seek for help. If they pray, enlightenment will come. And then the singing of that song, even if the music is badly played and the voices a little thin, will be more than ordinary music.

The same little change might be possible in the way we ask a student to pray in a devotional. We could ask a student sometime before the class if he or she would be willing to give the opening prayer. If he knows what we will be teaching that day and how much we need help, he may ask God for some help for himself. When that happens, the prayer offered in the class will have more of pleading and more of thanks. And the student who prays and the students who hear the petition will feel enlightenment.

The Lord has also prepared a way to multiply the efforts of a student we ask to give a spiritual thought. Most of our students read every day in the scriptures we are

studying. Many also read in the Book of Mormon. Whether or not they recognize it, they are receiving spiritual confirmation of the truth of those words as they read them. We will each do it in our own way, but we could invite a student to give the spiritual thought with words something like this: “I know that you have been touched by something you have read in the scriptures. Could you read that scripture to us and tell us what you felt?”

When that invitation is given early enough, a powerful sequence will begin. The student will listen more carefully for those quiet whisperings of the Spirit as he or she reads. That more careful listening will increase the frequency and the clarity with which the feelings come. With that will come a prompting of which scripture to choose. Then, students in the classroom will hear more than the words of the scripture and will feel more than the emotion of the student giving the scriptural thought that day. They will have been taught by the Spirit before we begin to teach the curriculum.

THE CURRICULUM

Now, let’s move to the curriculum—another tool. We could discover ways to improve our use of the curriculum simply by accepting President Clark’s counsel as true. He made clear that we must teach the fundamental doctrines of the Church as contained in the standard works and the teachings of the prophets, whose responsibility it is to declare doctrine. Those who design the curriculum have followed that injunction carefully. Every lesson plan, every suggestion for what to teach and how to teach it is prepared according to that principle. 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.

First, we can follow the sequence of the lessons. That may take some faith. For instance, in recent weeks I have been struck by how much better the people in the media could have interpreted the news they reported if they had read the book of Helaman. (That will get a chuckle from those of you who know the book of Helaman and have been watching television.) That recognition led me to study carefully the seminary and institute of religion curriculum for the seventh through the sixteenth chapters of that book, which describes the terrible cycles of prosperity, pride, wickedness, disaster, and then repentance among a people of promise. Now, if I found that I was scheduled to teach that material sometime in March, I might be sorely tempted to teach it right now. It would make a lively class discussion—maybe very lively. The prophets of that day saw our day in awful clarity. The students

might be impressed with the realization that prophets warn with authority from God. Surely they would see that scripture applies to the dangers of our time.

But my counsel is this: we will do well to stay with the sequence mapped by the inspired curriculum. Our willingness to do that may teach an even more powerful lesson of faith. Our students will see that we have a sure conviction that the scriptures apply to every time. There will be sufficient reason in March or a year from March or four years from March, sadly, to liken the words in Helaman unto ourselves. And we will, by our example, show that we have perfect faith that if the Lord would have us react today to the events of today, we can depend on today's prophet to tell us, rather than to risk the very fault President Clark warned us against when he said, "You are not . . . to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you to be" (*Chartered Course*, 10). Let us be modest, waiting for the living prophet, in applying the scriptures to explain news, sometimes terrible, which bombards the minds and hearts of our students.

Sticking with the content of the curriculum as well as its sequence will unlock our unique teaching gifts, not stifle them. There are more suggestions for ideas to teach, ways to teach them, and cross-references to employ than any of us can use. Even though we have reduced and simplified in obedience to the directions of the prophets, there is more in the curriculum than we can cover. So there is ample opportunity to select those parts which fit our unique teaching style. But since we want our students to inquire of the Lord so that they might be enlightened, we must bless them with example. To do that we could read the curriculum—every word. We might not have time to find and study every reference, but God knows our students and he knows those cross-references and enrichment sources. He knows and appreciates our tight schedules and the desires of our hearts. He will know when we have read and prepared all that we can. He will know how much we want our students to be enlightened and how much we want help. When we ask, he will guide us to know what parts of the curriculum to use, in what order, and what references to explore.

When we do that an old puzzle will be solved. At least it was a puzzle for me. In the teacher development class I taught many years ago, one of the steps was to "pre-assess." Do you remember that? It always troubled me. The teacher was to prepare a lesson by first learning what the students knew and what they needed. I was never quite clear how to do it. Even in teaching the little mini-lessons of that course it seemed

nearly impossible to pre-assess each student. Some of us have few enough students that we can guess from our close association what they know and what they need with some confidence. But for the rest of us, who have students in such numbers that it becomes very hard, there is comfort. The Lord knows perfectly what they know and what they need. He loves them and he loves us. And with his help we will pre-assess and choose not only those parts of the curriculum which will allow us the full use of our powers to teach but those which will bring down the powers of heaven on those students in our classroom that day.

Now, there may be times when we feel that we must add some enrichment to our curriculum. February is a good time for that to strike. The students may lack interest when they come to class or may begin to attend less regularly. Our first thoughts for something to add usually turn to something we know has held their interest in some other setting. Our students increasingly have been exposed to and attracted to various forms of worldly entertainment. President Clark's message suggests how to make that choice of what to add, what enrichment to bring, how to make that choice wisely. He seemed to anticipate the media-soaked world in which we and future generations would live. He promised that we would know, if we will inquire, what experiences will invite the Spirit and what will repel the very influence of the Spirit we seek. Here is his prayer for us in that talk, and I now make it to you my promise:

"May God bless you always in all your righteous endeavors. May He quicken your understanding, increase your wisdom, enlighten you by experience, bestow upon you patience, charity, and, as among your most precious gifts, endow you with the discernment of spirits that you may certainly know the spirit of righteousness and its opposite as they come to you. May He give you entrance to the hearts of those you teach and then make you know that as you enter there you stand in holy places that must be neither polluted nor defiled, either by false or corrupting doctrine or by sinful misdeed. May He enrich your knowledge with the skill and power to teach righteousness. May your faith and your testimonies increase, and your ability to encourage and foster them in others grow greater every day—all that the youth of Zion may be taught, built up, encouraged, heartened, that they may not fall by the wayside, but go on to eternal life, that these blessings coming to them, you through them may be blessed also" (*Chartered Course*, 12).

With that blessing of President Clark, we will never choose to enliven our seminaries and institutes with music, or performances, or speakers, or humor which might offend the Spirit.

QUESTIONS INVITE INSPIRATION

Now, I suggest one more routine tool that we might use more effectively: to ask and to answer questions is at the heart of all learning and all teaching. The Master asked, answered, and sometimes chose not to answer questions in his ministry. The curriculum suggests many questions to ask and to ponder. Some of those questions require only an answer of fact taken from memory: “Who was the father of Helaman?” or “Unto whom is this land consecrated?”

But some questions invite inspiration. Great teachers ask those. That may take just a small change of words, an inflection in the voice. 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. Then, even if no one should speak, they will be ready for you to bear quiet testimony of your witness that we are blessed to live when God has called prophets to guide and teach us.

As we ask questions of our students we will surely stir questions in their minds. Sometimes they will ask us things which are new to us or for which we do not know the answers prophets have given. We do best at such moments to remember our purpose; it is to allow our students to be fed by hearing truth which is confirmed by the Holy Ghost. Where we have any doubt that we can answer with a fundamental and well-established truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we serve our students best by saying simply, “I do not know.” That puts you in excellent company, for instance, when you say that you do not know the day of the Savior’s Second Coming. Even the angels of heaven would give that answer. We can show students our faith that God answers every question for which we need an answer and our patience to go forward without answers to all the others.

None of these suggestions may seem either novel or particularly important. But imagine with me for a moment one of our students in the years ahead. In your

mind’s eye try to see a little living room, a few small children gathered around, some of them sitting on the floor, and our student, now a parent, sitting in a chair, smiling down at them. It’s time for the family home evening to begin. A parent quietly announces the program. The children begin to do common things. One child leads the song. Another prays. One gives a spiritual thought. And then our student gives a simple lesson, with a few scriptures read by the oldest child from well-worn scriptures she brought from her bedside. Our student mentions something from a previous lesson and something about a lesson to come. And then there are some games, games with the same feeling that was in the room at the start and will be there at bedtime.

To someone watching, that might seem routine, common. But there are some things the observer could not see because they happened earlier. It happened because of the example of great teachers—your great examples—years before. The parents in that future home pondered over what scriptural curriculum to follow. They spent hours to prepare the lesson. They plead in prayer to know what ideas to teach and what scriptures to use. They gave private invitations to a child to choose the song, to pray, and to give the spiritual thought. Nor would the observer see the little girl reading her scriptures every night, nor perhaps the sparkling eyes of a child who answered a question chosen to invite the Spirit.

There will be days when it is hard to see fruit from our labors as teachers in the Church Educational System. But we are part of a mighty work with powers in place far beyond our own. The Lord of the harvest, Jesus Christ, is our Master and our Leader. He has called us to a special part of his work where he has placed tools to magnify the results of our labors. We will be faithful to our trust and he will be faithful to his promise. The youth of Zion will be built up, they will be fed the bread of life, and they will build the eternal families which are the foundation of the kingdom of God on the earth and the promise of the kingdom of heaven.

We in the Church Educational System will follow our chartered course. Our students will sail with us for only a few years, but they will meet us at our journey’s end with the thousands of their seed who have been blessed by their following your example. I invoke a blessing on you that you may know that the Lord loves you for your faithful service and that he will multiply the harvest.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

“ACCORDING TO HIS DESIRES”

ELDER DEAN L. LARSEN
OF THE PRESIDENCY OF
THE FIRST QUORUM OF
THE SEVENTY

Excerpt from New Era, October 1984, 4–6

For many years I have been haunted by an experience that occurred in my own life. I was working in a community where a full-time seminary was operated adjacent to the local high school. Part way through one school year, a teaching vacancy occurred at the seminary because of a health problem experienced by one of the teachers. I was invited to assume several of his classes each day over a period of time until a replacement could be found. In most respects it was a delightful experience and one that carries fond recollections for me. In one of the classes, however, there was a young man who proved to be a real challenge. He was in his final year of high school. He was bright and talented. It was obvious that he was popular with the other students and had a considerable influence with them. However, his conduct in the seminary class was generally disruptive. He sought for attention and usually got it as a result of his misbehavior in class.

In my desire to establish an atmosphere in the class where we could discuss and learn about things of a spiritual nature, I was repeatedly frustrated by the antics of this young man. He craved the attention of the other students. Several private consultations with him brought no improvements. In our interviews he was amiable enough, but he reverted to his disruptive behavior as soon as the next class convened.

I spoke with the counseling staff at the high school across the street from the seminary and learned from them that the young man came from a single parent home and that he was a constant problem in his classes at the high school, even though his aptitude test scores showed above average ability and talent.



There finally came a day when I knew I must do something decisive if I were to maintain some sense of order and direction in the class. After a typical outburst I invited the young man to step outside the classroom with me. There I told him that I could no longer sacrifice the opportunities of the other students in order to accommodate his whimsical behavior. I told him that he was no longer welcome in the class until he could control his conduct and contribute to the spiritual atmosphere necessary in a seminary classroom. He spun on his heel without comment and left the building. I never saw him again.

His mother called me that afternoon and expressed her displeasure and distress over what I had done. She warned me that the expulsion of her son from the seminary class would come back to haunt me.

The mother's prediction has been correct. I have never been able to completely free my mind of that experience. Within a week or two of these events, my work was changed, and I was moved to another part of the country. I have no idea whether the young man ever returned to seminary. I don't even remember his name now because it has been more than 20 years. I have sometimes wondered if there is a father of a large family out there somewhere who blames his estrangement from the Church on the action of an unsympathetic seminary teacher many years ago.

I am sure I have learned some things in the intervening years that would have helped me handle the situation more competently. Perhaps there are some things I could have done that I did not do to help the young man change his attitude and conduct. I am sure there were. However, as I look back upon those experiences, I recall vividly the concern I felt for the other students in the class and the intense desire I felt to somehow bless their lives. As my mind runs back over that episode, I inevitably come to the same dilemma I faced the day when I invited the young man to leave the seminary class. In addition to my responsibility for his spiritual opportunities, what was my responsibility to the other class members whose opportunities were being jeopardized by the conduct of the young man? What were his responsibilities?

GUIDANCE OF A HUMAN SOUL—THE TEACHER’S GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY

**PRESIDENT DAVID O.
MCKAY**

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

*Excerpt from Instructor, Sept.
1965, 341–43*

I believe that discipline in the classroom, which implies *self-control*, and which connotes *consideration for others*, is the most important part of teaching. . . .

The best lesson a child can learn is self-control, and to feel his relationship to



others to the extent that he must have respect for their feelings. . . .

. . . Disorderly conduct should not be permitted in any class in the Church or in any class in public schools.

A disorderly environment, one in which disrespect is shown to the teacher and to fellow pupils, is one that will stifle the important qualities in character. . . .

. . . Any teacher can dismiss a boy; 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 boy refuses, or if two boys refuse to produce that element, then they must leave. Better one boy starve than an entire class be slowly poisoned.

SELF-ACCOUNTABILITY AND HUMAN PROGRESS

**ELDER DEAN L. LARSEN
OF THE PRESIDENCY OF
THE FIRST QUORUM OF
THE SEVENTY**

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Latter-day Saints understand that mortal life was purposefully designed to place us in circumstances where we can be individually tested and where, by the exercise of the agency God has given us, we can determine what our future possibilities will be. The ancient prophet Lehi understood this when he said to his son Jacob, “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death” (2 Ne. 2:27).

He further explained that men “have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law . . . according to the commandments which God hath given” (2 Ne. 2:26).

On one occasion the Lord explained that it was his desire that “every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency . . .



given unto him, that every man may be accountable” (D&C 101:78).

When we understand what is right and what is wrong, we are in a position to exercise our freedom in making choices. In so doing, we must stand accountable for our decisions, and we cannot escape the inevitable consequences of these choices. Such freedom to exercise moral agency is essential in an environment where people have the highest prospects for progress and development.

By our very endowment as children of an Eternal Father, we have had implanted within our souls the urgency to be free. It is natural for us to want to be accountable for our own fates, because there is a whispering within us confirming that this accountability is absolutely essential to the attainment of our eternal destiny.

The existence of laws, regulations, and procedures has never been sufficient to compel men to obedience. Productive obedience comes through the exercise of free will. . . .

Programmed behavior cannot produce the level of spiritual development required to qualify one for eternal life. A necessary range of freedom and self-determination is essential to one’s spiritual development. With an understanding of correct principles and an intrinsic desire to apply them, one must be motivated within himself to do many good things of his own free will; for, as the revelation says, the power is in him wherein he is an agent unto himself (see D&C 58:27–28).

IN THE SPIRIT OF TESTIMONY

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER
OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

Let Not Your Heart Be
Troubled (1991), 15–19

TESTIMONY IS THE MOVING POWER

Testimony, then, is the moving power. Testimony is the redeeming force.

Programs will redeem only to the degree that they produce testimony. Elaborate programming will not hurt us if the Spirit is there, nor help us if it is not. . . .

There are two dimensions to testimony. The one, *a testimony we bear to them*, has power to lift and bless them. The other, infinitely more important, *the testimony they bear themselves*, has the power to redeem and exalt them. You might say they can get *a* testimony from what we say. *The* testimony comes when they themselves bear a witness of the truth and the Holy Ghost confirms it to them. James said, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). And the Lord said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17).

GIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO THE WEAK

If you who hold positions in the Church would redeem the lost sheep, see that the “vitamins” go to those with deficiencies and not merely to those who are nourished by regular, balanced diets.

Activity—the opportunity to serve and bear testimony—is like medicine. It will heal the spiritually sick. It will strengthen the spiritually weak. It is a most necessary ingredient in the redemption of the lost sheep. Yet there is a tendency, almost a programmed tendency, to give opportunities for growth to those who are already over-surfited with activity. This kind of pattern, evident in our stakes and wards, may keep the lost sheep out. . . .

Several years ago I visited a stake presided over by a man of unusual efficiency and ability. Every detail of the stake conference had been scheduled. He had done the usual thing in assigning prayers from the selected circle of the stake presidency, the high council, the bishops, and the stake patriarch. Those brethren had not been notified, so we changed the assignment from those who deserved the honor to those who needed—desperately needed—the experience.

The president had a detailed agenda for the general sessions, and he mentioned that there were twenty minutes



in one session that were not scheduled. I told him that we could call on some to respond who otherwise would not have the opportunity and needed the strengthening experience. He countered with the suggestion that he alert several able, prominent leaders to prepare for possible speaking assignments. “There will be many nonmembers present,” he said. “We are used to having an organized and very polished conference performance. We have very able people in the stake. They will leave an excellent impression.”

Twice again during our meeting he mentioned the schedule and pressed to have the stake’s “best performers” called. “Why don’t we save this time for those who need it most?” I said. His reaction was a disappointed, “Well, you are the General Authority.”

Early Sunday morning he reminded me that there was still time to alert someone and thus leave the best impression.

The morning session was opened by the president with a polished and stirring address. Next we called on his second counselor. He was obviously flustered, and he began, “You can’t believe a thing Brother Packer says.” (We had previously indicated that both counselors would probably speak in the afternoon session.) We were to go to his home for the noon meal. He had known there would be time to go over his notes, so he had left them at home.

For want of his notes he turned to testimony, giving an inspiring account of an administration he had performed during the week. A brother, given up by his doctors, had been called from the very shadows of death by the power of the priesthood. I do not know what was on his notes, but surely it could not have compared in inspiration to the testimony he bore.

An elderly woman sat on the front row holding hands with a weathered-looking man. She looked a bit out of place in the fashionably dressed congregation—rather homespun by comparison. She looked as if she ought to talk in conference, and given the privilege she reported her mission. Fifty-two years before she had returned from the mission field, and since then she had never been invited to speak in Church. It was a touching and moving witness that she bore.

Others were called upon to speak, and near the close of the meeting the president suggested that I take the remainder of the time. “Have you had any inspiration?” I asked. He said that he kept thinking of the mayor. (The voters in that large city had elected a member of the Church to be mayor, and he was in attendance.) When I told him we could have a greeting from the mayor, he whispered that the man was not active in the Church. When I suggested that he call upon him anyway he resisted, saying flatly that he was not worthy to

speaking in that meeting. At my insistence, however, he called the man to the stand.

The mayor's father had been a pioneer of the Church in that region. He had served as bishop of one of the wards and had been succeeded by one of his sons—a twin to the mayor, as I recall. The mayor was the lost sheep. He came to the pulpit and spoke, to my surprise, with bitterness and with hostility. His talk began something like this: "I don't know why you called on me. I don't know why I am in church today. I don't belong in church. I have never fit in. I don't agree with the way the Church does things."

I confess that I began to worry, but he then paused and lowered his eyes to the pulpit. From then until his talk was over he did not look up. After hesitating, he continued: "I guess I just as well tell you. I quit smoking six weeks ago." Then, shaking his fist in a gesture over his head towards the congregation, he said, "If any of you think that's easy, you have never suffered the hell I have suffered in the last few weeks."

Then he just melted. "I know the gospel is true," he said. "I've always known it was true. I learned that from my mother as a boy.

"I know the Church isn't out of order," he confessed, "It's me that's out of order, and I've always known that, too."

Then he spoke, perhaps, for all of the lost sheep when he pleaded: "I know it's me that is wrong, and I want to come back. I have been trying to come back, but you won't let me!"

Of course we would let him come back, but somehow we hadn't let him know that. After the meeting the congregation flooded up—not to us but to him, to say, "Welcome home!"

On the way to the airport after conference the stake president said to me, "I've learned a lesson today."

Hoping to confirm it, I said, "If we had done what you wanted you would have called on this man's father, wouldn't you, or perhaps his brother, the bishop?"

He nodded in affirmation and said: "Either of them, given five minutes, would have presented a stirring fifteen- or twenty-minute sermon to the approval of all in attendance. But no lost sheep would have been reclaimed."

All of us who lead in the wards and stakes must open the door to the lost sheep; stand aside to let them through. We must learn not to block the entrance. It is a narrow way. Sometimes we assume the clumsy posture of trying to pull them through the gate which we ourselves are blocking. Only when we have the spirit of lifting them, pushing them before us, seeing them elevated above us, do we have that spirit that will engender testimony.

I wonder if that is what the Lord meant when he said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matthew 9:12).

I do not appeal for the lowering of standards. Just the opposite. More lost sheep will respond quicker to high standards than they will to low ones. There is therapeutic value in spiritual discipline.

Discipline is a form of love, an expression of it. It is necessary and powerful in people's lives.

When a toddler is playing near the road, we steer carefully around him. Few will stop and see him to safety; if necessary, discipline him. That is, unless it is our own child or grandchild. If we love them enough we will do it. To withhold discipline when it would contribute to spiritual growth is an evidence of lack of love and concern.

Spiritual discipline framed in love and confirmed with testimony will help redeem souls.

BEWARE OF PRIDE

**PRESIDENT EZRA TAFT
BENSON**

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

In Conference Report, April 1989, 3; or Ensign, May 1989, 4-7

My beloved brethren and sisters, I rejoice to be with you in another glorious general conference of the Church. How grateful I am for the love, prayers, and



service of the devoted members of the Church throughout the world.

May I commend you faithful Saints who are striving to flood the earth and your lives with the Book of Mormon. Not only must we move forward in a monumental manner more copies of the Book of Mormon, but we must move boldly forward into our own lives and throughout the earth more of its marvelous messages.

This sacred volume was written for us—for our day. Its scriptures are to be likened unto ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23).

THE SIN OF PRIDE

The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that the Book of Mormon is the “record of a fallen people” (D&C 20:9). Why did they fall? This is one of the major messages of the Book of Mormon. Mormon gives the answer in the closing chapters of the book in these words: “Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction” (Moroni 8:27). And then, lest we miss that momentous Book of Mormon message from that fallen people, the Lord warns us in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old” (D&C 38:39).

I earnestly seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I strive to bring forth light on this Book of Mormon message—the sin of pride. This message has been weighing heavily on my soul for some time. I know the Lord wants this message delivered now.

“BEWARE OF PRIDE”

In the premortal council, it was pride that felled Lucifer, “a son of the morning” (2 Nephi 24:12–15; see also D&C 76:25–27; Moses 4:3). At the end of this world, when God cleanses the earth by fire, the proud will be burned as stubble and the meek shall inherit the earth (see 3 Nephi 12:5; 25:1; D&C 29:9; Joseph Smith—History 1:37; Malachi 4:1).

Three times in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord uses the phrase “beware of pride,” including a warning to the second elder of the Church, Oliver Cowdery, and to Emma Smith, the wife of the Prophet (D&C 23:1; see also D&C 25:14; 38:39).

GOD’S DEFINITION OF PRIDE

Pride is a very misunderstood sin, and many are sinning in ignorance (see Mosiah 3:11; 3 Nephi 6:18). In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride—it is always considered a sin. Therefore, no matter how the world uses the term, we must understand how God uses the term so we can understand the language of holy writ and profit thereby (see 2 Nephi 4:15; Mosiah 1:3–7; Alma 5:61).

Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements of the sin, but the heart, or core, is still missing.

The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. *Enmity* means “hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.” It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us.

ENMITY TOWARD GOD

Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is

in the spirit of “my will and not thine be done.” As Paul said, they “seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Philippians 2:21).

Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled (see Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:30).

The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works.

Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.

ENMITY TOWARD FELLOWMEN

Another major portion of this very prevalent sin of pride is enmity toward our fellowmen. We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them (see Helaman 6:17; D&C 58:41).

The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. In the words of C. S. Lewis: “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. . . . It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone” (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan, 1952], pp. 109–10).

In the pre-earthly council, Lucifer placed his proposal in competition with the Father’s plan as advocated by Jesus Christ (see Moses 4:1–3). He wished to be honored above all others (see 2 Nephi 24:13). In short, his prideful desire was to dethrone God (see D&C 29:36; 76:28).

CONSEQUENCES OF PRIDE

The scriptures abound with evidences of the severe consequences of the sin of pride to individuals, groups, cities, and nations. “Pride goeth before destruction” (Proverbs 16:18). It destroyed the Nephite nation and the city of Sodom (see Moroni 8:27; Ezekiel 16:49–50).

It was through pride that Christ was crucified. The Pharisees were wroth because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, which was a threat to their position, and so they plotted His death (see John 11:53).

Saul became an enemy to David through pride. He was jealous because the crowds of Israelite women were singing that “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7; see also 18:6, 8).

The proud stand more in fear of men's judgment than of God's judgment (see D&C 3:6–7; 30:1–2; 60:2). "What will men think of me?" weighs heavier than "What will God think of me?"

King Noah was about to free the prophet Abinadi, but an appeal to his pride by his wicked priests sent Abinadi to the flames (see Mosiah 17:11–12). Herod sorrowed at the request of his wife to behead John the Baptist. But his prideful desire to look good to "them which sat with him at meat" caused him to kill John (Matthew 14:9; see also Mark 6:26).

Fear of men's judgment manifests itself in competition for men's approval. The proud love "the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42–43). Our motives for the things we do are where the sin is manifest. Jesus said He did "always those things" that pleased God (John 8:29). Would we not do well to have the pleasing of God as our motive rather than to try to elevate ourselves above our brother and outdo another?

Some prideful people are not so concerned as to whether their wages meet their needs as they are that their wages are more than someone else's. Their reward is being a cut above the rest. This is the enmity of pride.

When pride has a hold on our hearts, we lose our independence of the world and deliver our freedoms to the bondage of men's judgment. The world shouts louder than the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. The reasoning of men overrides the revelations of God, and the proud let go of the iron rod (see 1 Nephi 8:19–28; 11:25; 15:23–24).

MANIFESTATIONS OF PRIDE

Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others but is rarely admitted in ourselves. Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the rich and the learned, looking down at the rest of us (see 2 Nephi 9:42). There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up. It is manifest in so many ways, such as faultfinding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another, and being unforgiving and jealous.

Disobedience is essentially a prideful power struggle against someone in authority over us. It can be a parent, a priesthood leader, a teacher, or ultimately God. A proud person hates the fact that someone is above him. He thinks this lowers his position.

Selfishness is one of the more common faces of pride. "How everything affects me" is the center of all that matters—self-conceit, self-pity, worldly self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-seeking.

Pride results in secret combinations which are built up to get power, gain, and glory of the world (see Helaman 7:5;

Ether 8:9, 16, 22–23; Moses 5:31). This fruit of the sin of pride, namely secret combinations, brought down both the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations and has been and will yet be the cause of the fall of many nations (see Ether 8:18–25).

Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all fall into this category of pride.

Contention in our families drives the Spirit of the Lord away. It also drives many of our family members away. Contention ranges from a hostile spoken word to worldwide conflicts. The scriptures tell us that "only by pride cometh contention" (Proverbs 13:10; see also Proverbs 28:25).

The scriptures testify that the proud are easily offended and hold grudges (see 1 Nephi 16:1–3). They withhold forgiveness to keep another in their debt and to justify their injured feelings.

The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily (see Proverbs 15:10; Amos 5:10). Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures (see Matthew 3:9; John 6:30–59).

The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. Pride is ugly. It says, "If you succeed, I am a failure."

If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men's, we will have self-esteem.

"A DAMNING SIN"

Pride is a damning sin in the true sense of that word. It limits or stops progression (see Alma 12:10–11). The proud are not easily taught (see 1 Nephi 15:3, 7–11). They won't change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong.

Pride adversely affects all our relationships—our relationship with God and His servants, between husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee, teacher and student, and all mankind. Our degree of pride determines how we treat our God and our brothers and sisters. Christ wants to lift us to where He is. Do we desire to do the same for others?

Pride fades our feelings of sonship to God and brotherhood to man. It separates and divides us by "ranks," according to our "riches" and our "chances for learning" (3 Nephi 6:12). Unity is impossible for a proud people, and unless we are one we are not the Lord's (see Mosiah 18:21; D&C 38:27; 105:2–4; Moses 7:18).

THE COST OF PRIDE

Think of what pride has cost us in the past and what it is now costing us in our own lives, our families, and the Church.

Think of the repentance that could take place with lives changed, marriages preserved, and homes strengthened, if pride did not keep us from confessing our sins and forsaking them (see D&C 58:43).

Think of the many who are less-active members of the Church because they were offended and their pride will not allow them to forgive or fully sup at the Lord's table.

Think of the tens of thousands of additional young men and couples who could be on missions except for the pride that keeps them from yielding their hearts unto God (see Alma 10:6; Helaman 3:34–35).

Think how temple work would increase if the time spent in this godly service were more important than the many prideful pursuits that compete for our time.

THE UNIVERSAL SIN

Pride affects all of us at various times and in various degrees. Now you can see why the building in Lehi's dream that represents the pride of the world was large and spacious and great was the multitude that did enter into it (see 1 Nephi 8:26, 33; 11:35–36).

Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. Yes, pride *is* the universal sin, the great vice.

HUMILITY: THE ANTIDOTE FOR PRIDE

The antidote for pride is humility—meekness, submissiveness (see Alma 7:23). It is the broken heart and contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20; 12:19; D&C 20:37; 59:8; Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2). As Rudyard Kipling put it so well:

*The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.*

(“God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,” *Hymns*, no. 80)

CHOOSE TO BE HUMBLE

God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. Alma said, “Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble” (Alma 32:16).

Let us choose to be humble.

We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are (see D&C 38:24; 81:5; 84:106).

We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement (see Jacob 4:10; Helaman 15:3; D&C 63:55; 101:4–5; 108:1; 124:61, 84; 136:31; Proverbs 9:8).

We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us (see 3 Nephi 13:11, 14; D&C 64:10).

We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service (see Mosiah 2:16–17).

We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others (see Alma 4:19; 31:5; 48:20).

We can choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more frequently.

We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God (see D&C 58:43; Mosiah 27:25–26; Alma 5:7–14, 49).

We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives (see 3 Nephi 11:11; 13:33; Moroni 10:32).

Let us choose to be humble. We can do it. I know we can.

THE GREAT STUMBLING BLOCK TO ZION

My dear brethren and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It was essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites (see 4 Nephi 1:24–25).

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: Pride *is* the great stumbling block to Zion.

We must cleanse the inner vessel by conquering pride (see Alma 6:2–4; Matthew 23:25–26).

We must yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,” put off the prideful “natural man,” become “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,” and become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble” (Mosiah 3:19; see also Alma 13:28).

That we may do so and go on to fulfill our divine destiny is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

THE DANGERS OF PRIESTCRAFT

PAUL V. JOHNSON

CES ADMINISTRATOR—
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND
ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

*CES Conference on the Doctrine
and Covenants and Church
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I want to focus today on
some safety training.

Before I went into the
mission field, I worked in a
manufacturing plant welding farm equipment. They
taught us safety in the plant and around the machinery.
There were certain safety standards and practices that
were observed, which even included what type of
footwear we had to use.

I have been in a few mines as a visitor. It is interesting
that even visitors receive safety training and are equipped
with safety equipment before entering the mine. Modern
mines have devices to monitor air quality so that if there
is a problem, the miners have some warning and can
quickly leave the mine. Before modern monitoring systems
were developed, miners used to take canaries down into
the mines with them. Canaries are more susceptible to
the poisonous gases and would be asphyxiated before the
miners were affected. If the canary died, the miners knew
to get out of there. It was a type of early warning system.

The goal for safety training in manufacturing and mining
and other industries is to eliminate dangerous situations,
cut down on accidents, and save lives. I have never
really thought of Church education as being a dangerous
profession, at least in regard to physical accidents. We
do, however, have spiritual dangers.

When Jeffrey R. Holland was the Commissioner of
Education, he gave us a message in which he referred to
the care employers in industries take for the safety of
their employees:

“Our own occupation has unique hazards, if I may call
them that; and our employers have some of that same
loving concern. I hope that these rather constant
reminders that we put before you are not seen as any lack
of faith or trust. They are clearly not that. They are, like
the signs on the shack where the blasting powder is kept,
a reminder. They are always there—for our good—and I
suppose they must always be there” (“Pitfalls and Powder
Sheds,” *The Growing Edge*, Nov. 1978, 1).

There are several occupational hazards we face. Some
are not specific to our occupation but can affect our



employment. For example, failing to keep current on
financial obligations can lead to loss of employment in CES.

There are many divorces and marital problems in the world
today. In most occupations an employee’s marriage and
home life wouldn’t make any difference in whether the
employee could keep a job. But because of the importance
the Board of Education places on having good role models
in the classroom, it does make a difference in CES.

Another hazard could be failing to maintain proper
relationships with students. Every year we lose people
because they are not careful and haven’t followed counsel.
This has been talked about many times, so I won’t spend
any time on it today. Just once more, please be careful in
your conduct with your students.

Another challenge we have is to maintain doctrinal purity.
Commenting on this hazard, Jeffrey R. Holland said:

“Brethren and sisters, please be cautious and restrained
and totally orthodox in all matters of Church doctrine.
This is, as you might suppose, of great concern to the
Brethren, our employers in this great work. And while
they love us and help and trust us individually and
collectively—and they do—they cannot fail to respond
to some anxiety expressed by a member of the Church
who feels that some inappropriate doctrinal or historical
position has been taken in the classroom. It is in light of
this rather constant danger always before us . . . that I
give you these cautions and reminders. . . .

“With this appropriate restraint, what we then teach
must be in harmony with the prophets and the holy
scriptures. We are not called upon to teach exotic,
titillating, or self-serving doctrines. Surely we have our
educational hands full effectively communicating the
most basic and fundamental principles of salvation. . . .
Continue to study for the rest of your life, but use
caution and limit your classroom instruction to what the
Brethren prescribe. Listen carefully and see what they
choose to teach at general conference—and they *are*
ordained” (“Pitfalls,” 1).

There is another concern we are facing. We are now
getting Internet access on our computers at our
seminaries, institutes of religion, and administrative
sites. Brothers and sisters, as we open this door, we
need to be very careful. The Church, not just CES, has
a zero-tolerance policy on pornography and Internet use
with Church equipment. You can lose your job in one
day. And we just hate to see that happen and hope that
you understand how serious this is. As a matter of fact,
the filtering system that is used at the present time can
generate reports that include every Internet site visited
from every CES computer. We hope that you will be
very careful. In the future, if you display a personal

addiction or pattern of pornography use, whether it involves CES equipment or not, it will result in the loss of your job. This great plague is rampant in the world, but we can't have it in our ranks. We must have the Spirit when we teach these precious youth. The prophets have warned us of this evil, and we must be examples of cleanliness in this area.

THE DANGERS OF PRIESTCRAFT

There are a number of other hazards that may be unique to our type of occupation, but I would like to focus on only one of these today. It is the danger of priestcraft. I don't know how much time we have spent in the past on training in this area—not much under that title. There are particular pitfalls with priestcrafts to which we as paid professionals are most susceptible. If we are aware of the dangers, we can more easily avoid them.

What are priestcrafts? Nephi gives us a very succinct and helpful definition:

“He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (2 Nephi 26:29).

Nephi explained that they “set themselves up for a light unto the world” in order to “get gain” or to get “praise” and they do not “seek . . . the welfare of Zion.” There are various manifestations of priestcraft, including setting up churches or even becoming anti-Christ, as we see in the Book of Mormon. But let's focus on manifestations that we are more likely to see in our profession as CES educators. These are probably a lot more subtle than cases like Nehor or Korihor, but they still fit under the definition of priestcraft as given by Nephi, and they will damage the work. They will damage our students. They will damage us.

GETTING GAIN

From Nephi's definition we see that setting oneself as a light seems to be central to the problem of priestcraft. The reasons for setting oneself up as a light include getting gain and praise. Let's look a little bit closer at each of these areas. A few weeks ago, I had a conversation with a man who said he had a brother who taught in CES for a few years and then left the system. He could never reconcile in his mind that he was teaching the gospel for money. This man asked me how I reconcile it in my mind. It is a great question. How do we reconcile that? Most of us have probably contemplated it, probably before we were hired and I suspect many times since then.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball, who was then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, gave the best explanation I have heard:

“I want our youth never to be taught by mercenaries. Should any of you be teaching in this program merely as an occupation, almost wholly for the compensation, then I hope you will be assigned to one of the other areas. But if your salary is incidental and your grand and magnificent obsession is our children and their growth and development, then I hope you will be teaching in New York and Michigan and Wisconsin and Utah where my loved children are” (“What I Hope You Will Teach My Grandchildren and All Others of the Youth of Zion,” address to religious educators, Brigham Young University, 11 July 1966, 8).

That is a great key for us. Where is our heart? If it is for the welfare of Zion and its youth, I think we are in good shape.

The desire to get gain can be manifest in our regular duties and our salary. It can also be manifest with outside related interests such as publishing or continuing education. I ask a question: Can a person receive a salary in CES and not be involved in priestcraft? Yes, definitely. Can a person publish, get pay for continuing education, or take advantage of other opportunities and not be involved in priestcraft? Yes, they can. It is a matter of the heart. What is the motivation? What President Kimball said is a key in this area. When our hearts are set on money, it clouds our view and leads to bad decisions.

PRAISE OF THE WORLD

Besides getting gain, Nephi tells us that people set themselves as a light for the praise of the world. Some teachers have a strong desire for praise. In order to obtain that praise, they might begin to set themselves up as a light. When people look to them as a light, they are willing to give the praise they desire. This may increase their desire for more praise, and the cycle continues. It becomes dangerous because it can lead to teachers changing the doctrine or teaching things that shouldn't be taught or using teaching methods that shouldn't be used in order to appear as a light.

In 1987 Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said:

“Be careful, be aware, be wise when people speak well of you. When people treat you with great respect and love, be careful, be aware, be wise. When you are honored, pointed out, and recognized, it can be a cross, especially if you believe what is said about you. . . .

“Praise of the world can be a heavy cross. How often I have heard it said over the years, ‘He was great until he became successful, and then he couldn’t handle it.’ I’m not talking about money and position. I’m talking about recognition, even in Church responsibilities. . . .

“I would pray that we would avoid being carried away by praise, success, or even achieving goals that we have set for ourselves” (“Carry Your Cross,” *Brigham Young University 1986–87 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [1987], 141).

We are in an occupation that many times brings praise and adulation. It can come from students, from parents, priesthood leaders, from other teachers, and even from the Brethren. But as Elder Ashton said, we need to be careful, aware, and wise.

The First Presidency in a letter to stake presidents and bishops in 1952 referred to the harmful effect notoriety can have on new converts: “Too much attention and commendation frequently have a tendency to dull the edge of the faith and works that carry us to the exaltation we all seek” (30 June 1952, 4).

I think the principle applies to anyone who receives too much attention and commendation. In our endeavor, we can receive a lot of commendation and a lot of praise. If that becomes our goal or if we become intoxicated by it, we begin to set ourselves up as a light.

THE WORDS OF THE BRETHERN

The Brethren through the years have addressed the danger of setting ourselves up as a light. Let’s review a few of their comments. In 1992 Elder Dallin H. Oaks said:

“Another illustration of a strength that can become our downfall concerns the charismatic teacher. With a trained mind and a skillful manner of presentation, a teacher can become unusually popular and effective in teaching. But Satan will try to use that strength to corrupt the teacher by encouraging him or her to gather a following of disciples. A Church or Church education teacher or LDS university professor who gathers such a following and does this ‘for the sake of riches and honor’ (Alma 1:16) is guilty of priestcraft.

“Priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion’ (2 Nephi 26:29).

“Teachers who are most popular—and therefore most effective—have a special susceptibility to this form of priestcraft. If they are not careful, their strength can become their spiritual downfall. They can become like Almon Babbitt, with whom the Lord was not well pleased because, as the revelation states,

“‘He aspireth to establish his counsel instead of the counsel which I have ordained, even that of the Presidency of my Church; and he setteth up a golden calf for the worship of my people’ (D&C 124:84)” (“Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall,” *Brigham Young University 1991–92 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [1992], 111).

In 1989 in the Assembly Hall, President Howard W. Hunter, who was then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, addressed us at our annual Evening with a General Authority. He said:

“Let me give a word of caution to you. 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. . . .

“. . . Please make sure the loyalty of these students is to the scriptures and the Lord and the doctrines of the restored Church. Point them toward God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and toward the leadership of the true Church. Make certain that when the glamour and charisma of your personality and lectures and classroom environment are gone that they are not left empty-handed to face the world. Give them the gifts that will carry them through when they have to stand alone. When you do this, the entire Church is blessed for generations to come. . . .

“Let me offer a word of caution on [the subject of teaching with the Spirit]. I think if we are not careful as professional 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*, address to religious educators, 10 Feb. 1989, 2–3).

In our Evening with a General Authority last February, Elder Robert D. Hales spoke to us. You will remember his words:

“Each of you who teach seminary and institute has the desire of the heart to be an angel. This is good, but it is a great temptation to play the part of the Pied Piper and to figure that you’re going to gather them all around you and love them into a testimony; or to feel that if you can become very popular, you can lead and be the role model and make a difference in the lives of your students. . . .

“There is nothing more dangerous than when a student turns his or her love and attention to the teacher the same way a convert sometimes does to a missionary rather than to the Lord. And then if the teacher or missionary leaves or conducts his life contrary to the teachings of the gospel, the student is devastated. His testimony falters. His faith is destroyed. The really great teacher is careful to have the students turn themselves to the Lord.

“Once we have touched the lives of the youth, we have to turn them to God the Father and His Son, our Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ, through prayer, study, and the application in their lives of the gospel principles” (*Teaching by Faith*, address to religious educators, 1 Feb. 2002, 7).

In April conference of 1997, Elder Henry B. Eyring said: “One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 25). We have just reviewed one of those repeated warnings from the Brethren given specifically to us.

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

One of the challenges in recognizing and avoiding priestcraft is that it is a matter of the heart. It is like pride. In fact, pride is the root of the problem. If there is an accident in a manufacturing plant, usually there are visible signs, such as blood or hysteria. Most people immediately recognize that there has been an accident. But it is not that way with injuries of the heart. We need to be more sensitive in order to recognize the early signs of spiritual problems.

These signs may be a little like the canaries they used to take into the mines. If you were mining and saw that the canary looked really woozy, I guess you could take two approaches. One would be to leave immediately. The other would be to assume the canary had the flu. That second approach could be fatal to a miner. The

same type of approach in our occupation could also be dangerous.

It might be useful to think about the following symptoms and review our own behaviors and what happens in our classrooms. These symptoms wouldn’t be conclusive proof—they are just symptoms. But it could be that the canary really has more than just the flu.

In relation to gathering a following, one of the symptoms is that we base our self-worth on praise from others for our lessons or talks. As I noted before, this is dangerous ground to be on because the accolades become the touchstone and then we can compromise ourselves in what we teach or how we teach it so that we can get more accolades.

Another symptom is that we feel there would be a huge hole in CES if they changed our assignment; we feel a little irreplaceable. Even if this were true, it might be better to allow those who make the changes to worry about that. If you really are irreplaceable, I’ll bet they know about it already.

Sometimes our students may get to the point where they refuse to take seminary or institute unless they can get one particular teacher.

Sometimes the numbers in some teachers’ classes are unbalanced with the rest of the faculty. We can even get focused on the competition of having more students than the other teachers in the building.

Sometimes a teacher may actually get a following of other teachers in a faculty or in an area. People might even have a stronger allegiance to that teacher than to their appointed leaders.

There may be an unusual number of demands to speak or teach different groups.

I’m sure there are other symptoms of a teacher gathering a following that you might want to ponder.

Let’s consider some symptoms of setting ourselves up as a light in the area of knowledge or scholarship.

Perhaps some of us feel we teach a deeper doctrine—more pure and plain than is found in any curriculum or than any of the other teachers teach.

Maybe we have special sources that others don’t generally have access to or we have some special study regimen that we feel puts us above the others.

What if we feel that CES or the Church are not emphasizing a certain doctrine enough, or even that they misunderstand it. In fact, there have been a few who feel the Brethren don’t understand a particular doctrine clearly. When it gets to that point, the canary has dropped over and is not breathing anymore.

Some of us have gospel hobbies that are taught in all of our classes, no matter what course we are teaching.

We may feel as if we have to know the answer to every question. We are embarrassed if a student asks us a question and we don't know the answer.

We might look to certain General Authorities or CES teachers as the ones with the pure gospel, and discount or put down other General Authorities or other teachers.

We might teach our own philosophies about the doctrines.

There might be questions that have arisen from parents or priesthood or CES leaders about some of the things we have been teaching in our classes.

We might teach our own opinion strongly and try forcefully to sway the students to side with us.

Another symptom, not directly related to the CES classroom, is establishing ourselves as the expert in our own wards and stakes in gospel matters. If there is ever a difficult question in gospel doctrine class, do most of the people look to us for the answer? We may be subtly setting ourselves up as a light.

Do we feel frustrated with others because they don't seem to understand the gospel as well as we do? In the Book of Mormon there was a time when "the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning" (3 Nephi 6:12). We, as religious educators, probably have greater chances for learning the gospel than anyone in the world. Our employment includes studying and teaching the gospel. We need to be careful not to look down on others who don't have the same opportunity.

Sometimes inservice presentations can become an unspoken competition about who has done the most in-depth research and come up with points that no one has heard before.

Sometimes we promote an "insight addiction syndrome," in which the students just have to come to our class because we have the true insights into the gospel. One of the dangers with that, whether they are emotional insights or scholarly insights, is that the insight becomes an end in itself. It doesn't necessarily translate into living the gospel.

We may become a so-called expert in a certain area of the gospel and may chafe at the policy of teaching different courses in institute.

We can get so focused on publishing or other scholarship that our own pursuit of knowledge takes priority over the students and over our teaching.

Now let's take a look at a few symptoms where we may be setting ourselves up as a light in an emotional or spiritual sense.

We may become dependent on finding strongly emotional stories to use in our classes, or we may use stories that focus unduly on ourselves and on our personal lives.

We may stretch stories so that they are not totally true.

We may be very free with how often we tell the students the Spirit "told me to do" something. Or as President Hunter mentioned, we may manipulate emotions and label it as the Spirit.

We may become too involved with personal counseling with students.

THE RESULTS

So if there are priestcrafts in our system, what are the results? I think the great danger is that we don't have power in our teaching. Or our teaching may be powerful, but it may not be the power of God (see D&C 50:13-23). Maybe it is emotionally powerful, or scholastically powerful, but it doesn't help with the lasting changes that need to happen in a student's life. And as you know, the Brethren have asked us to take a hard look at how we can get the scriptures and gospel knowledge from the head to the heart so that our students will do the right things in their lives.

We can also teach a wrong message if we are involved in priestcraft. The students might worship the teachers but not get the true connections with the gospel doctrine. It is like a father who forcefully teaches his children about honesty but cheats on his taxes. The words are there, but the power isn't there. A student may not realize exactly what is going on, but something doesn't click. It doesn't click because the Spirit isn't there like it could be there.

What if teachers can remain free of priestcraft? Well, then we have a powerful situation. They can teach the doctrine and the gospel simply and unadorned, and they can teach with the Spirit. In fact, if we can't teach with the Spirit, we can't accomplish what we have been asked to do. The only way to learn spiritual things is by the Spirit. It is the only way our students can have the power to live the gospel in these latter days.

If our teachers are free of priestcraft, the students will love them, but they won't be dependent on them. They will love you, and they will be grateful for what you taught them, but they will be turned to the Lord. They will be turned to their parents and their priesthood leaders. There will be miracles in the lives of the students, and we will be able to witness them. We can do it.

Priestcraft is an occupational hazard. It can affect us, but it doesn't have to if we are careful and humble. We can do the right things. We can have powerful classrooms because we have great people—you. You have great attitudes. You work hard. You have allowed the Lord to be a powerful influence on so many. I am grateful for the teachers I have had in Church education.

Recently I was involved in a question and answer session with some employees. One person made a comment to the effect that sometimes it seems the administration uses a shotgun when it should use a rifle. In other words, we may have a concern with a few people and instead of talking directly to those few people we take a shotgun to everyone in the system. Please know I intentionally wanted to talk with all our full-time employees about this topic. It is aimed at all of us. It is for me, for the zone administrators, and for every teacher in the system. It would be a mistake to make a little list in your mind of people you hope are listening very carefully to this message. Each of us faces this particular occupational hazard.

Since priestcraft is a matter of the heart, it is best battled and eradicated at a personal level. It is so much better to be self-regulating in these matters before they cause concern for priesthood leaders and supervisors. It is a matter that we must watch closely in our lives. It has a tendency to creep in if we are not diligent.

As we regularly reflect upon the dangers associated with our profession, we must continually think of the students. To quote Elder Holland once again:

“For your sake and theirs, go carefully and modestly and cautiously amidst the hazards. We thank you for letting us nail this sign to the wall of the powder shed one more time. We will undoubtedly do it again for your safety and ours” (“Pitfalls,” 1).

IN CONCLUSION

I want to conclude with a scripture from the New Testament. The Apostle Paul is reviewing with the Thessalonians how he taught them the gospel. I think this is a beautiful example of a teacher who is not infected with priestcraft. As we read through this, I would like you to notice what Paul did, what he didn't do (especially in light of the priestcraft concept), why he did it, and what the results were.

“For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

“For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

“Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:3–13).

I know the gospel is true. I know that we are involved in a very important work. I know that it is crucial that we keep our lives pure, so that we can teach the youth of the Church and they can have the truths of the gospel witnessed to their souls through the power of the Spirit.

I know that President [Gordon B.] Hinckley is a prophet and that the scriptures are the word of God. It is a great privilege we have to teach from the scriptures and the words of the prophets. I pray for you good teachers. I express my gratitude for all you do. I am grateful for you spouses, too. I am grateful for my wife, Jill, and am so glad to have her with me. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

FOUR IMPERATIVES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS

**ELDER GORDON B.
HINCKLEY**

**OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES**

*Excerpt from An Evening with
Elder Gordon B. Hinckley,
15 September 1978, 3*



It is imperative that we as teachers in the seminary and institute of religion program of the Church read constantly the scriptures and other books related directly to the history, the doctrine, and the practices of the Church. But we ought also to be reading secular history, the great literature that has survived the ages, and the writings of contemporary thinkers and doers. In so doing we will find inspiration to pass on to our

students, who will need all the balanced strength they can get as they face the world into which they move.

Brethren and sisters, grow in the knowledge of the eternal truths which you are called to teach, and grow in understanding of the great and good men and women who have walked the earth and of the marvelous phenomena with which we are surrounded in the world in which we live. Now and then as I have watched a man become obsessed with a narrow segment of knowledge, I have worried about him. I have seen a few such. They have pursued relentlessly only a sliver of knowledge until they have lost a sense of balance. At the moment I think of two who went so far and became so misguided in their narrow pursuits, that they who once had been effective teachers of youth have been found to be in apostasy and have been excommunicated from the Church. Keep balance in your lives. Beware of obsession. Beware of narrowness. Let your interests range over many good fields while working with growing strength in the field of your own profession.

OUR CONSUMING MISSION

**ELDER JEFFREY R.
HOLLAND**

**OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES**

*Excerpt from An Evening
with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland,
5 February 1999, 1–4*



THE EARLY YEARS

Once upon a time as a newly-married couple, Pat and I made the decision to do what you do. We thought at the time we would be spending our lives in religious education. (As it turns out, we are, but it's just in a way and with a calling we never could have foreseen.) In a very real way I am indebted to Pat for that chance, for her role in the decision we made together to pursue a life in the Church Educational System.

I can remember very clearly (much the way Elder Eyring remembered his mother); I can almost describe the setting in our apartment in the spring of 1965 when, without any forethought in the matter and certainly no particular planning, it appeared that religious education might be the field opening up for us. I remember saying, "Honey, one of the things this means is that we will never have much money." She fired back without a hesitation in her voice and not a blink of her eye. She said, "We'll have enough. I refuse to let money determine the quality or the meaning of our lives."

It was one of her finest hours. I think literally and truly I would not have been able to sign that first contract if her fiery little declaration had not been ringing in my ears. It would be one thing to prune down my own list of material wants and needs, but I did not know if it was fair to expect it, and in some sense impose it, on my wife and our children yet unborn. She stiffened my backbone then, and she has stiffened it ever since. Along the way we went off to get a Ph.D. at a pretty good university, lived like paupers among the BMW splendor of our Ivy League neighbors, came back to CES with degree in hand, two children, and not a cent to our name, to sign our next contract for the grand total of \$11,000. My Yale friends were signing contracts for considerably more than that, I can assure you.

But my point is, it was the best professional decision I could have ever made. I can describe for you right now where I was and what I was specifically praying about when the crystal-clear answer came to me that returning to CES is what we were to do. My Yale professors thought I was deranged; they somehow thought they had failed to reach me. What had reached me was the hand of the Lord. He responded, and our lives have been blessed beyond our wildest imagination. We have been able to do the thing we love the most with and among the best people in all the world.

And our children, the delight of their parents' eye, as yours are to you, are grateful and have expressed appreciation for growing up under the wonderful umbrella of the Church Educational System somewhere, with all the friends and

associations and good influences that are shared here. I was right in that we did not make much money along the way. Well, so what? Because Pat was right also; we've had enough.

This little introductory segment is meant to be a tribute to my wife and to all the wives of our full-time men, wives who sacrifice and support and devote themselves so fully to the work their husbands have chosen to do. (I hasten to say that I know we have some full-time sisters, where it is the husbands who do the supporting. And some who teach, as it were, alone. I acknowledge that. I include every one of you in the spirit of this.) But for the most part, the men constitute much of the full-time cadre that we have, and I want you wives to know that we acknowledge you and love you. Thank heaven for your faith and your devotion to religious education and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

After writing of the Latter-day Saint experience, Wallace Stegner said once of our pioneer ancestors: The Mormon men were strong, but the Mormon "women were incredible" (*The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* [1964], 13). In my view of things, including my view of my own wife, that is still true today. Thank you, sisters. We know you sacrifice. We feel your support. We know you stretch things at home on what is sometimes a very slim budget. If it gives you any consolation, we too know that life and we wouldn't trade it then or now for anything in the world.

After we left BYU to join the ranks in the field as new CES employees, we got the same introduction to the system that you got. My first year we did a one-man band routine in the San Francisco Bay area, beefing up two small institute programs, starting three more, plus helping with early-morning seminary. As I recall, it seemed like a dozen preparations a week and literally hundreds of miles driven.

The next year in Seattle we took on a larger institute with what were at the time larger challenges, only to be made a bishop about ninety days after arriving in town. Rent was higher, ancillary costs were greater, and another child was coming. At one point I made application to take a second job as a night watchman—but couldn't afford the uniform, literally.

Then came the move to New Haven, yet greater expenses, and back to school full time. Eight months or so after our arrival in New Haven, Pat was called to be the Relief Society president, and I was called to be a counselor in the stake presidency. The stake center was fifty-five miles from our home. The stake covered all of Connecticut, half of Massachusetts, the southern portion of Rhode Island, the northeastern tip of New York, and a swath into Vermont. It was huge. We suffered mega-stress. We had determined that with two babies at home, Pat would not work. So I took every CES opportunity I could get anywhere in our part of New England and any other job I could find. Beloved William E. Berrett's thoughtfulness

in giving us assignments in that situation saved our lives financially. I will be forever grateful to him.

FRIDAY NIGHT DATES

Somewhere in that whole experience we decided we weren't going to survive physically or emotionally if we didn't impose a little structure on that chaos. One of the things we did was vow that we would have a date every Friday night no matter what—that neither of us would accept any responsibility from anyone for anything on that night. (Except, of course, an evening with the brethren in the Church Educational System. I'm conscious that this is Friday night. Welcome to your date, honey.) It wasn't easy then either and I am not sure we were 100 percent successful in holding to the calendar, but we tried.

What studying and writing and working and teaching and stake presidencing I did, I did Saturday through Friday until 5:00 p.m. What Relief Societing and babytending (our own and other children) and laundering and everything else that a young mother does, Pat did from Saturday through Friday until 5:00 p.m. But on that one night for a few hours we would be together. We would step off the merry-go-round. We would take a deep breath or two and remind ourselves how much we loved each other, why we were doing all of this in the first place, and that surely there must be light at the end of the tunnel somewhere.

I do not remember those dates ever amounting to much. I literally cannot remember ever going to dinner, but we must have. We certainly must have at least gotten a pizza occasionally. I just don't remember it. What I do remember is walking in the Yale-New Haven Arboretum, which was just across the street from our student housing. I remember long walks there holding hands and dreaming dreams of what life might be like when things were less demanding. Down at the end of the street was a Dairy Queen where we would usually end up for a cone or, on really good nights, a root beer float.

Modest as my big-time spending was, Pat has said a hundred times that those Friday nights got her through those years. She said, "I looked forward to them and I counted on them. I knew that however many nights you were studying or working or away on Church assignments, I still had Friday night to count on. [And, of course, we always had Monday.] No, the dates," she said, "weren't much as social extravaganzas go [that's an understatement], but they were mine and I felt in control of both my own life and my husband's for at least a few hours each week. It got me through some very demanding times."

A drugstore psychologist once said that people need three things to be emotionally healthy: someone to love, significant things to do, and something pleasant to look

forward to. Brethren, make sure your wife has something pleasant, something genuinely fun, to look forward to regularly.

I, too, remember those dates as some of the most wonderful of our lives. In fact (and here is an amazing little phenomenon that I have observed and so have you over the years), I can only remember the good things from those days. The stress and the anguish and the lack of enough time or money to do things, that part seems to have faded from my memory. All I seem to remember with any vivid recollection are things like walks with my wife in a beautiful university arboretum and particularly good Dairy Queen ice cream cones. And New England in the fall, when the colors of the countryside covering our stake were indescribably beautiful. And being at the scenes of this nation's early history and reading the works of those who forged for us what one author has called *The First New Nation* (by Seymour Martin Lipset). And on and on and on. Now forgive me for talking about our life, but remember, I am supposed to be personal.

Perhaps recounting the first years of marriage is not quite so applicable to most of us as we sit—aging—in this congregation tonight. But maybe the principles still apply. My point in saying this is that God was good to us then, He is good to us now, and He will always be good to us, including in the memories He allows us to retain forever. The sorrows and the pain somehow subside and the happiness seems even sweeter later on. Love your lives, savor every stage of them, embrace the hard times and the lean years along with the good, and make sure you take time for yourselves, for each other, and for your marriage. That kind of good sense will come back to bless you forever in your home, in your professions, and in the Church itself.

Well, forgive that little amble down memory lane. Let's move on to a totally different subject. And here I want very much *not* to be misunderstood.

STAY BALANCED

For the sake of the Church and your students and the gospel we love and teach, brethren and sisters, please work hard at staying balanced and steady, not given to extremism or rumors, sensationalism or fads of various kinds that often sweep through the land (and sometimes come among the members of the Church). In this regard you can be for us, and we hope with us, part of a solution, and never part of a problem.

I know the challenge of trying to hold a class's attention. Every teacher wants to be a piper, in the very best sense, appealing to a student for the right reasons and mesmerizing them with our grasp of gospel truths. In this audience you and I know how demanding that is hour after hour, day after day, week after week. Teaching effectively, teaching powerfully, teaching with enthusiasm, solid preparation, and appealing supporting materials, that's hard work—it's among the hardest work I know and surely among the hardest work I have ever done. But please resist the temptation to push into the sensational or the extreme any doctrine you teach or any counsel you may give.

The gospel net gathers fish of every kind; we know that. Some of those will be sitting before you in a classroom. Every soul is precious. But we must never fan the flames of any kind of bizarre behavior in any way. We get enough of that in the normal course of things. You as teachers of the young can do so much to keep your students "the rising generation," as the Book of Mormon calls them (Alma 5:49), solidly rooted and securely grounded. In your teachings and your examples, your commentary and your counsel, please be balanced, be moderate, be sensible, and build faith.

THE MANTLE IS FAR, FAR GREATER THAN THE INTELLECT

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER
OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

*Address to religious educators at
a symposium on the Doctrine and
Covenants and Church history,
Brigham Young University,
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The fact that I speak quite directly on a most important subject will, I hope, be regarded as something of a



tribute to you who are our loyal, devoted, and inspired associates.

I have come to believe that it is the tendency for many members of the Church who spend a great deal of time in academic research to begin to judge the Church, its doctrine, organization, and leadership, present and past, by the principles of their own profession. Ofttimes this is done unwittingly, and some of it, perhaps, is not harmful.

It is an easy thing for a man with extensive academic training to measure the Church using the principles he has been taught in his professional training as his standard. In my mind it ought to be the other way around.

A member of the Church ought always, particularly if he is pursuing extensive academic studies, to judge the professions of man against the revealed word of the Lord.

Many disciplines are subject to this danger. Over the years I have seen many members of the Church lose their testimonies and yield their faith as the price for academic achievement. Many others have been sorely tested. Let me illustrate.

During my last year as one of the supervisors of seminaries and institutes of religion, a seminary teacher went to a large university in the East to complete a doctorate in counseling and guidance. The ranking authority in that field was there and quickly took an interest in this personable, clean-cut, very intelligent, young Latter-day Saint.

Our teacher attracted attention as he moved through the course work with comparative ease, and his future looked bright indeed—that is, until he came to the dissertation. He chose to study the ward bishop as a counselor.

At that time I was called as one of the General Authorities and helped him obtain authorization to interview and send questionnaires to a cross-section of bishops.

In the dissertation he described the calling and ordination of a bishop, described the power of discernment, the right of a bishop to receive revelation, and his right to spiritual guidance. His doctoral committee did not understand this. They felt it had no place in a scholarly paper and insisted that he take it out.

He came to see me. I read his dissertation and suggested that he satisfy their concern by introducing the discussion on spiritual matters with a statement such as “the Latter-day Saints *believe* the bishop has spiritual power,” or “they *claim* that there is inspiration from God attending the bishop in his calling.”

But the committee denied him even this. It was obvious that they would be quite embarrassed to have this ingredient included in a scholarly dissertation.

It is as Paul said: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

He was reminded of his very great potential and was told that with some little accommodation—specifically, leaving out all the spiritual references—his dissertation would be published and his reputation established. They predicted that he would become an authority in the field.

He was tempted. Perhaps, once established, he could then insert this spiritual ingredient back into his work. Then, as an established authority, he could *really* help the Church.

But something stood in the way: his faith, his integrity. So, he did the best he could with his dissertation. It did

not contain enough of the Spirit to satisfy him, and too much to have been fully accepted by his worldly professors. But he received his degree.

His dissertation is not truly the scholarly document it might have been, because the most essential ingredient is missing. Revelation is so central a part of a bishop’s experience in counseling that any study which ignores it cannot be regarded as a scholarly work.

He returned to the modest income and to the relative obscurity of the Church Educational System.

I talked to this teacher a day or two ago. We talked about his dissertation and the fact that it was never published. He has been a *great* influence among the youth of the Church. He did the right thing. He summed up his experience this way: “The mantle is far, far greater than the intellect; the priesthood is the guiding power.” His statement becomes the title for this talk and embodies what I hope to convey to you.

I must not be too critical of those professors. They do not know of the things of the Spirit. One can understand their position. It is another thing, however, when we consider members of the Church, particularly those who hold the priesthood and have made covenants in the temple. Many do not do as my associate did; rather, they capitulate, cross over the line, and forsake the things of the Spirit. Thereafter, they judge the Church, the doctrine, and the leadership by the standards of their academic profession.

This problem has affected some of those who have taught and have written about the history of the Church. These professors say of themselves that religious faith has little influence on Mormon scholars. They say this because, obviously, they are not simply Latter-day Saints but are also intellectuals trained, for the most part, in secular institutions. They would that some historians who are Latter-day Saints write history as they were taught in graduate school, rather than as Mormons.

If we are not careful, very careful, and if we are not wise, very wise, we first leave out of our professional study the things of the Spirit. The next step soon follows: we leave the spiritual things out of our lives.

I want to read to you a most significant statement by President Joseph F. Smith, a statement that you would do well to keep in mind in your teaching and research, and one which will serve as somewhat of a text for my remarks to you:

“It has not been by the wisdom of man that this people have been directed in their course until the present; it has been by the wisdom of Him who is above man and whose knowledge is greater than that of man, and whose power is above the power of man. . . . The hand of the Lord may not be visible to all. There may be many who

can not discern the workings of God's will in the progress and development of this great latter-day work, *but there are those who see in every hour and in every moment of the existence of the Church, from its beginning until now, the overruling, almighty hand of Him who sent His Only Begotten Son to the world to become a sacrifice for the sin of the world.*" (In Conference Report, Apr. 1904, p. 2; emphasis added.)

If we do not keep this constantly in mind—that the Lord directs this Church—we may lose our way in the world of intellectual and scholarly research.

You seminary teachers and some of you institute and BYU men will be teaching the history of the Church this school year. This is an unparalleled opportunity in the lives of your students to increase their faith and testimony of the divinity of this work. Your objective should be that they will see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.

As one who has taken the journey a number of times, I offer four cautions before you begin.

FIRST CAUTION

There is no such thing as an accurate, objective history of the Church without consideration of the spiritual powers that attend this work.

There is no such thing as a scholarly, objective study of the office of bishop without consideration of spiritual guidance, of discernment, and of revelation. That is not scholarship. Accordingly, I repeat, there is no such thing as an accurate or objective history of the Church which ignores the Spirit.

You might as well try to write the biography of Mendelssohn without hearing or mentioning his music, or write the life of Rembrandt without mentioning light or canvas or color.

If someone who knew very little about music should write a biography of Mendelssohn, one who had been trained to have a feeling for music would recognize that very quickly. That reader would not be many pages into the manuscript before he would know that a most essential ingredient had been left out.

Mendelssohn, no doubt, would emerge as an ordinary man, perhaps not an impressive man at all. That which makes him most worth remembering would be gone. Without it he would appear, at best, eccentric. Certainly, controversy would develop over why a biography at all. Whoever should read the biography would not know, really know, Mendelssohn at all—this, even though the biographer might have invested exhaustive research in his project and might have been accurate in every other detail.

And, if you viewed Rembrandt only in black and white, you would miss most of his inspiration.

Those of us who are extensively engaged in researching the wisdom of man, including those who write and those who teach Church history, are not immune from these dangers. I have walked that road of scholarly research and study and know something of the dangers. If anything, we are more vulnerable than those in some of the other disciplines. Church history can be so very interesting and so inspiring as to be a very powerful tool indeed for building faith. If not properly written or properly taught, it may be a faith destroyer.

President Brigham Young admonished Karl G. Maeser not to teach even the times table without the Spirit of the Lord. How much more essential is that Spirit in the research, the writing, and the teaching of Church history.

If we who research, write, and teach the history of the Church ignore the spiritual on the pretext that the world may not understand it, our work will not be objective. And if, for the same reason, we keep it quite secular, we will produce a history that is not accurate and not scholarly—this, in spite of the extent of research or the nature of the individual statements or the incidents which are included as part of it, and notwithstanding the training or scholarly reputation of the one who writes or teaches it. We would end up with a history with the one most essential ingredient left out.

Those who have the Spirit can recognize very quickly whether something is missing in a written Church history—this in spite of the fact that the author may be a highly trained historian and the reader is not. And, I might add, we have been getting a great deal of experience in this regard in the past few years.

President Wilford Woodruff warned: "I will here say that God has inspired me to keep a Journal History of this Church, and *I warn the future Historians to give Credence to my History of this Church and Kingdom*; for my Testimony is true, and the truth of its record will be manifest in the world to Come." (Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 6 July 1877, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; emphasis added. Spelling and punctuation have been standardized.)

SECOND CAUTION

There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not.

Some things that are true are not very useful.

Historians seem to take great pride in publishing something new, particularly if it illustrates a weakness or mistake of a prominent historical figure. For some reason, historians and novelists seem to savor such things. If it related to a living person, it would come under the

heading of gossip. History can be as misleading as gossip and much more difficult—often impossible—to verify.

The writer or the teacher who has an exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told is laying a foundation for his own judgment. He should not complain if one day he himself receives as he has given. Perhaps that is what is contemplated in having one's sins preached from the housetops.

Some time ago a historian gave a lecture to an audience of college students on one of the past Presidents of the Church. It seemed to be his purpose to show that that President was a man subject to the foibles of men. He introduced many so-called facts that put that President in a very unfavorable light, particularly when they were taken out of the context of the historical period in which he lived.

Someone who was not theretofore acquainted with this historical figure (particularly someone not mature) must have come away very negatively affected. Those who were unsteady in their convictions surely must have had their faith weakened or destroyed.

I began teaching seminary under Abel S. Rich, principal. He was the second seminary teacher employed by the Church and a man of maturity, wisdom, and experience. Among the lessons I learned from him was this: When I want to know about a man, I seek out those who know him best. I do not go to his enemies but to his friends. He would not confide in his enemy. You could not know the innermost thoughts of his heart by consulting those who would injure him.

We are teachers and should know the importance of the principle of prerequisites. It is easily illustrated with the subject of chemistry. No responsible chemist would advise, and no reputable school would permit, a beginning student to register for advanced chemistry without a knowledge of the fundamental principles of chemistry. The advanced course would be a destructive mistake, even for a very brilliant beginning student. Even that brilliant student would need some knowledge of the elements, of atoms and molecules, of electrons, of valence, of compounds and properties. To let a student proceed without the knowledge of fundamentals would surely destroy his interest in, and his future with, the field of chemistry.

The same point may be made with reference to so-called sex education. There are many things that are factual, even elevating, about this subject. There are aspects of this subject that are so perverted and ugly it does little good to talk of them at all. They cannot be safely taught to little children or to those who are not eligible by virtue of age or maturity or authorizing ordinance to understand them.

Teaching some things that are true, prematurely or at the wrong time, can invite sorrow and heartbreak instead of the joy intended to accompany learning.

What is true with these two subjects is, if anything, doubly true in the field of religion. The scriptures teach emphatically that we must give milk before meat. The Lord made it very clear that some things are to be taught selectively, and some things are to be given only to those who are worthy.

It matters very much not only *what* we are told but *when* we are told it. Be careful that you build faith rather than destroy it.

President William E. Berrett has told us how grateful he is that a testimony that the past leaders of the Church were prophets of God was firmly fixed in his mind *before* he was exposed to some of the so-called facts that historians have put in their published writings.

This principle of prerequisites is so fundamental to all education that I have never been quite able to understand why historians are so willing to ignore it. And, if those outside the Church have little to guide them but the tenets of their profession, those inside the Church should know better.

Some historians write and speak as though the only ones to read or listen are mature, experienced historians. They write and speak to a very narrow audience. Unfortunately, many of the things they tell one another are not uplifting, go far beyond the audience they may have intended, and destroy faith.

What that historian did with the reputation of the President of the Church was not worth doing. He seemed determined to convince everyone that the *prophet* was a *man*. We knew that already. All of the prophets and all of the Apostles have been men. It would have been much more worthwhile for him to have convinced us that the *man* was a *prophet*, a fact quite as true as the fact that he was a man.

He has taken something away from the memory of a prophet. He has destroyed faith. I remind you of the truth Shakespeare taught, ironically spoken by Iago: "Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing; / 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands— / But he that filches from me my good name / Robs me of that which not enriches him / And makes me poor indeed" (*Othello*, act 3, sc. 3, lines 157–61).

The sad thing is that he may have, in years past, taken great interest in those who led the Church and desired to draw close to them. But instead of following that long, steep, discouraging, and occasionally dangerous path to spiritual achievement, instead of going up to where they were, he devised a way of collecting mistakes and weaknesses and limitations to compare with his own. In that sense he has attempted to bring a historical figure down to his level and in that way feel close to him and perhaps justify his own weaknesses.

I agree with President Stephen L Richards, who stated:

“If a man of history has secured over the years a high place in the esteem of his countrymen and fellow men and has become imbedded in their affections, it has seemingly become a pleasing pastime for researchers and scholars to delve into the past of such a man, discover, if may be, some of his weaknesses, and then write a book exposing hitherto unpublished alleged factual findings, all of which tends to rob the historic character of the idealistic esteem and veneration in which he may have been held through the years.

“This ‘debunking,’ we are told, is in the interest of realism, that the facts should be known. If an historic character has made a great contribution to country and society, and if his name and his deeds have been used over the generations to foster high ideals of character and service, what good is to be accomplished by digging out of the past and exploiting weaknesses, which perhaps a generous contemporary public forgave and subdued?” (*Where Is Wisdom?* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1955], p. 155.)

That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weakness and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith—particularly one within the Church, and more particularly one who is employed specifically to build faith—places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master, and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities.

One who chooses to follow the tenets of his profession, regardless of how they may injure the Church or destroy the faith of those not ready for “advanced history,” is himself in spiritual jeopardy. If that one is a member of the Church, he has broken his covenants and will be accountable. After all of the tomorrows of mortality have been finished, he will not stand where he might have stood.

I recall a conversation with President Henry D. Moyle. We were driving back from Arizona and were talking about a man who destroyed the faith of young people from the vantage point of a teaching position. Someone asked President Moyle why this man was still a member of the Church when he did things like that. “He is not a member of the Church,” President Moyle answered firmly. Another replied that he had not heard of his excommunication. “He has excommunicated himself,” President Moyle responded. “He has cut himself off from the Spirit of God. Whether or not we get around to holding a court doesn’t matter that much; he has cut himself off from the Spirit of the Lord.”

THIRD CAUTION

In an effort to be objective, impartial, and scholarly, a writer or a teacher may unwittingly be giving equal time to the adversary.

Someone told of the man who entitled his book *An Unbiased History of the Civil War from the Southern Point of View*. While we chuckle at that, there is something to be said about presenting Church history from the viewpoint of those who have righteously lived it. The idea that we must be neutral and argue quite as much in favor of the adversary as we do in favor of righteousness is neither reasonable nor safe.

In the Church we are not neutral. We are one-sided. There is a war going on, and we are engaged in it. It is the war between good and evil, and we are belligerents defending the good. We are therefore obliged to give preference to and protect all that is represented in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we have made covenants to do it.

Some of our scholars establish for themselves a posture of neutrality. They call it “sympathetic detachment.” Historians are particularly wont to do that. If they make a complimentary statement about the Church, they seem to have to counter it with something that is uncomplimentary.

Some of them, since they are members of the Church, are quite embarrassed with the thought that they might be accused of being partial. They care very much what the world thinks and are very careful to include in their writings criticism of the Church leaders of the past.

They particularly strive to be acclaimed as historians as measured by the world’s standard. They would do well to read Nephi’s vision of the iron rod and ponder verses 24–28.

“And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

“And *after* they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed. [Notice the word *after*: He is talking of those who are partakers of the goodness of God—of Church members.]

“And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

“And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceeding fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

“And *after* they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.” (1 Nephi 8:24–28; emphasis added.)

And I want to say in all seriousness that there is a limit to the patience of the Lord with respect to those who are under covenant to bless and protect His Church and kingdom upon the earth but do not do it.

Particularly are we in danger if we are out to make a name for ourselves, if our “hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that [we] do not learn this one lesson—

“That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

“That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

“Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.” (D&C 121:35–38.)

There is much in the scriptures and in our Church literature to convince us that we are at war with the adversary. We are not obliged as a church, nor are we as members obliged, to accommodate the enemy in this battle.

President Joseph Fielding Smith pointed out that it would be a foolish general who would give access to all of his intelligence to his enemy. It is neither expected nor necessary for us to accommodate those who seek to retrieve references from our sources, distort them, and use them against us.

Suppose that a well-managed business corporation is threatened by takeover from another corporation. Suppose that the corporation bent on the takeover is determined to drain off all its assets and then dissolve this company. You can rest assured that the threatened company would hire legal counsel to protect itself.

Can you imagine that attorney, under contract to protect the company, having fixed in his mind that he must not really take sides, that he must be impartial?

Suppose that when the records of the company he has been employed to protect are opened for him to prepare his brief he collects evidence and passes some of it to the attorneys of the enemy company. His own firm may then be in great jeopardy because of his disloyal conduct.

Do you not recognize a breach of ethics, or integrity, or morality?

I think you can see the point I am making. Those of you who are employed by the Church have a special responsibility to build faith, not destroy it. If you do not do that, but in fact accommodate the enemy, who is the destroyer of faith, you become in that sense a traitor to the cause you have made covenants to protect.

Those who have carefully purged their work of any religious faith in the name of academic freedom or so-called honesty ought not expect to be accommodated in their researches or to be paid by the Church to do it.

Rest assured, also, that you will get little truth, and less benefit, from those who steal documents or those who deal in stolen goods. There have always been, and we have among us today, those who seek entrance to restricted libraries and files to secretly copy material and steal it away in hopes of finding some detail that has not as yet been published—this in order that they may sell it for money or profit in some way from its publication or inflate an ego by being first to publish it.

In some cases the motive is to destroy faith, if they can, and the Church, if they are able. The Church will move forward, and their efforts will be of little moment. But such conduct does not go unnoticed in the eternal scheme of things.

We should not be ashamed to be committed, to be converted, to be biased in favor of the Lord.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith pointed out the fallacy of trying to work both sides of the street: “You may as well say that the Book of Mormon is not true because it does not give credence to the story the Lamanites told of the Nephites” (*Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1925, p. 55).

A number of years ago, professors from Harvard University who were members of the Church invited me to lunch over at the Harvard Business School faculty dining room. They wanted to know if I would join them in participating in a new publication; they wanted me to contribute to it.

They were generous in their compliments, saying that because I had a doctorate a number of people in the Church would listen to me, and being a General Authority (at that time I was an Assistant to the Twelve), I could have some very useful influence.

I listened to them very attentively but indicated at the close of the conversation that I would not join them. I asked to be excused from responding to their request. When they asked why, I told them this: “When your associates announced the project, they described how useful it would be to the Church—a niche that needed to be filled.” And then the spokesman said, “We are all active and faithful members of the Church; *however*, . . .”

I told my two hosts that if the announcement had read, “We are active and faithful members of the Church; *therefore*, . . .” I would have joined their organization. I had serious questions about a “however” organization. I have little worry over a “therefore” organization.

That *however* meant that they put a condition upon their Church membership and their faith. It meant that they put something else first. It meant that they were to judge the Church and gospel and the leaders of it against their own backgrounds and training. It meant that their commitment was partial, and that partial commitment is not enough to qualify one for full spiritual light.

I would not contribute to publications, nor would I belong to organizations, that by spirit or inclination are faith destroying. There are plenty of scholars in the world determined to find all secular truth. There are so few of us, relatively speaking, striving to convey the spiritual truths, who are protecting the Church. We cannot safely be neutral.

Many years ago Elder Widtsoe made reference to a foolish teacher in the Mutual Improvement Association who sponsored some debate with the intent of improving the abilities of the young members of the Church. He chose as a subject “Resolved: Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.” Unfortunately, the con side won.

The youngsters speaking in favor of the proposition were not as clever and their arguments were not as carefully prepared as those of the opposing side. The fact that Joseph Smith remained a prophet after the debate was over did not protect some of the participants from suffering the destruction of their faith and thereafter conducting their lives as though Joseph Smith were not a prophet and as though the church he founded and the gospel he restored were not true.

FOURTH CAUTION

The final caution concerns the idea that so long as something is already in print, so long as it is available from another source, there is nothing out of order in using it in writing or speaking or teaching.

Surely you can see the fallacy in that.

I have on occasion been disappointed when I have read statements that tend to belittle or degrade the Church or past leaders of the Church in writings of those who are supposed to be worthy members of the Church. When I have commented on my disappointment to see that in print, the answer has been, “It was printed before, and it’s available, and therefore I saw no reason not to publish it again.”

You do not do well to see that it is disseminated. It may be read by those not mature enough for “advanced history,” and a testimony in seedling stage may be crushed.

Several years ago President Ezra Taft Benson spoke to you and said: “It has come to our attention that some of our teachers, particularly in our university programs, are purchasing writings from known apostates . . . in an effort to become informed about certain points of view or to glean from their research. You must realize that when you purchase their writings or subscribe to their periodicals, you help sustain their cause. We would hope that their writings not be on your seminary or institute or personal bookshelves. We are entrusting you to represent the Lord and the First Presidency to your students, not the views of the detractors of the Church” (*The Gospel Teacher and His Message* [address delivered to Church Educational System personnel, 17 Sept. 1976], p. 12.)

I endorse that sound counsel to you.

Remember: when you see the bitter apostate, you do not see only an absence of light, you see also the presence of darkness.

Do not spread disease germs!

I learned a great lesson years ago when I interviewed a young man then in the mission home. He was disqualified from serving a mission. He confessed to a transgression that you would think would never enter the mind of a normal human being.

“Where on earth did you ever get an idea to do something like that?” I asked.

To my great surprise he said, “From my bishop.”

He said the bishop in the interview said, “Have you ever done this? Have you ever done that? Have you ever done this other?” and described in detail things that the young man had never thought of. They preyed upon his mind until, under perverse inspiration, the opportunity presented itself, and he fell.

Don’t perpetuate the unworthy, the unsavory, or the sensational.

Some things that are in print go out of print, and the old statement “good riddance to bad rubbish” might apply.

Elder G. Homer Durham of the First Quorum of the Seventy told of counsel he had received from one of his professors who was an eminent historian: “You don’t write [and, I might add, you don’t teach] history out of the garbage pails.”

Moroni gave an excellent rule for historians to follow:

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.” (Moroni 7:16–17.)

It makes a great deal of difference whether we regard mortality as the conclusion and fulfillment of our existence or as a preparation for an eternal existence as well.

Those are the cautions I give to you who teach and write Church history.

There are qualifications to teach or to write the history of this church. If one is lacking in any one of these qualifications, he cannot properly teach the history of the Church. He can recite facts and give a point of view, but he cannot properly teach the history of the Church.

I will state these qualifications in the form of questions so that you can assess your own qualifications.

Do you believe that God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ personally appeared to the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., in the year 1820?

Do you have personal witness that the Father and the Son appeared in all their glory and stood above that young man and instructed him according to the testimony that he gave to the world in his published history?

Do you know that the Prophet Joseph Smith’s testimony is true because you have received a spiritual witness of its truth?

Do you believe that the church that was restored through him is, in the Lord’s words, “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased” (D&C 1:30)? Do you know by the Holy Ghost that this is *the* Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints restored by heavenly messengers in this modern era; that the Church constitutes the kingdom of God on earth, not just an institution fabricated by human agency?

Do you believe that the successors to the prophet Joseph Smith were and are prophets, seers, and revelators; that revelation from heaven directs the decisions, policies, and pronouncements that come from the headquarters of the Church? Have you come to the settled conviction, by the Spirit, that these prophets truly represent the Lord?

Now, you obviously noted that I did not talk about academic qualifications. Facts, understanding, and scholarship can be attained by personal study and essential course work. The three qualifications I have named come by the Spirit, to the individual. You can’t

receive them by secular training or study, by academic inquiry or scientific investigation.

I repeat: if there is a deficiency in any of these, then, regardless of what other training an individual possesses, he cannot comprehend and write or teach the true history of this Church. The things of God are understood only by one who possesses the Spirit of God.

Now, what about that historian who defamed the early President of the Church and may well have weakened or destroyed faith in the process? What about other members of the Church who have in their writings or in their teaching been guilty of something similar?

I want to say something that may surprise you. I know of a man who did something quite as destructive as that who later became the prophet of the Church. I refer to Alma the Younger. I learned about him from reading the Book of Mormon, which in reality is a very reliable history of the Church in ancient times.

You are acquainted with the record of Alma as a young man. He followed his father, the prophet Alma, about, and ridiculed what his father preached. He was, in that period of his life, a destroyer of faith. Then came a turning point. Because his father had prayed for it, he came to himself. He changed. He became one of the great men in religious history.

I want to say something to that historian and to others who may have placed higher value on intellect than upon the mantle.

The Brethren then and now are men, very ordinary men, who have come for the most part from very humble beginnings. We need your help! We desperately need it. We cannot research and organize the history of the Church. We do not have the time to do it. And we do not have the training that you possess. But we do know the Spirit and how essential a part of our history it is. Ours is the duty to organize the Church, to set it in order, to confer the keys of authority, to perform the ordinances, to watch the borders of the kingdom and carry burdens, heavy burdens, for others and for ourselves that you can know little about.

Do you know how inadequate we really are compared to the callings we have received? Can you feel in a measure the weight, the overwhelming weight, of responsibility that is ours? If you look for inadequacy and imperfections, you can find them quite easily. But you may not feel as we feel the enormous weight of responsibility associated with the callings that have come to us. We are not free to do some of the things that scholars think would be so reasonable, for the Lord will not permit us to do them, and it is his church. He presides over it.

There is another part of the on-going history of the Church that you may not be acquainted with. Perhaps I can illustrate it for you.

A few years ago it was my sad privilege to accompany President Kimball, then President of the Twelve, to a distant stake to replace a stake leader who had been excommunicated for a transgression. Our hearts went out to this good man who had done such an unworthy thing. His sorrow and anguish and suffering brought to my mind the phrase “gall of bitterness.”

Thereafter, on intermittent occasions, I would receive a call from President Kimball: “Have you heard from this brother? How is he doing? Have you been in touch with him?” After Brother Kimball became President of the Church, the calls did not cease. They increased in frequency.

One day I received a call from the President. “I have been thinking of this brother. Do you think it is too soon to have him baptized?” (Always a question, never a command.) I responded with my feelings, and he said, “Why don’t you see if he could come here to see you? If you feel good about it after an interview, we could proceed.”

A short time later, I arrived very early at the office. As I left my car I saw President Kimball enter his. He was going to the airport on his way to Europe. He rolled down the window to greet me, and I told him I had good news about our brother. “He was baptized last night,” I said.

He motioned for me to get into the car and sit beside him and asked me to tell him all about it. I told him of the interview and that I had concluded by telling our brother very plainly that his baptism must not be a signal that his priesthood blessings would be restored in the foreseeable future. I told him that it would be a long, long time before that would happen.

President Kimball patted me on the knee in a gentle gesture of correction and said, “Well, maybe not so long. . . .” Soon thereafter the intermittent phone calls began again.

I want to tell you of another lesson I received. Many years ago, when I was a new General Authority and not very experienced, I was called to the office of the First Counselor in the First Presidency. “We find you are going to the West Coast for conference this weekend. We wonder if you would leave a day or so early to help with a problem at a mission headquarters in another city.”

A missionary had confessed to transgression, and the mission president was reluctant to take action. I was instructed to see that a court was convened and that the missionary was excommunicated.

I went, and I interviewed the elder at great length. I then went to a park to think and pray about it. It was an unusual case, most unusual. After two hours, I telephoned the member of the First Presidency from a pay telephone and told him a little of what I had learned and of how I felt about the matter. He asked what I wanted to do. Hesitantly I told him I wanted to delay, to take no action now. Then

I said, “But, President, tell me to do it, again, and I will do it.”

His voice came over the telephone and seemed like thunder to me: “Don’t you go against the voice of the Spirit!”

I had learned a great lesson. I have never forgotten it, and the inspiration greatly affected the outcome when final action was taken.

Do not yield your faith in payment for an advanced degree or for the recognition and acclaim of the world. Do not turn away from the Lord nor from his Church nor from his servants. You are needed—oh, how you are needed!

It may be that you will lay your scholarly reputation and the acclaim of your colleagues in the world as a sacrifice upon the altar of service. They may never understand the things of the Spirit as you have a right to do. They may not regard you as an authority or as a scholar. Just remember, when the test came to Abraham, he didn’t really have to sacrifice Isaac. He just had to be willing to.

Now a final lesson from Church history, one that illustrates the kind of thing from the past that builds faith and increases testimony.

William W. Phelps had been a trusted associate of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Then, in an hour of crisis when the Prophet needed him most, he turned against him and joined the apostates and oppressors who sought the Prophet’s life.

Later, Brother Phelps came to himself. He repented of what he had done and wrote to the Prophet Joseph Smith, asking for his forgiveness. I want to read you the letter the Prophet Joseph wrote to Brother Phelps in reply.

I confess also that many times I have moaned in agony when I have thought of the many incidents of this kind that researchers have discovered when they have pored over the record of our history but have left them out of their writings for fear they would be regarded as not worthy of a scholarly review of Church history.

Now the letter.

“Dear Brother Phelps: . . .

“You may in some measure realize what my feelings, as well as Elder Rigdon’s and Brother Hyrum’s were, when we read your letter—truly our hearts were melted into tenderness and compassion when we ascertained your resolves, &c. I can assure you I feel a disposition to act on your case in a manner that will meet the approbation of Jehovah, (whose servant I am), and agreeable to the principles of truth and righteousness which have been revealed; and inasmuch as long-suffering, patience, and mercy have ever characterized the dealings of our heavenly Father towards the humble and penitent, I feel disposed to copy the example, cherish the same principles, and by so doing be a savior of my fellow men.

“It is true, that we have suffered much in consequence of your behavior—the cup of gall, already full enough for mortals to drink, was indeed filled to overflowing when you turned against us. One with whom we had oft taken sweet counsel together, and enjoyed many refreshing seasons from the Lord—‘had it been an enemy, we could have borne it.’ . . .

“However, the cup has been drunk, the will of our Father has been done, and we are yet alive, for which we thank the Lord. And having been delivered from the hands of wicked men by the mercy of our God, we say it is your privilege to be delivered from the powers of the adversary, be brought into the liberty of God’s dear children, and again take your stand among the Saints of the Most High, and by diligence, humility, and love unfeigned, commend yourself to our God, and your God, and to the Church of Jesus Christ.

“Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal . . .

“Come on, dear brother, since the war is past,

For friends at first, are friends again at last.’

“Yours as ever,

“Joseph Smith, Jun.”

(History of the Church, 4:162–64.)

Brother Phelps did return to full fellowship. He was a writer of hymns. The one we sang to open this meeting, “Praise to the Man,” was written by Brother Phelps, as were “O God, the Eternal Father,” “Now Let Us Rejoice,” “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain,” “The Spirit of God Like a Fire”—to mention but a few.

Oh, how great the loss to the Church if Brother Phelps had not returned. And how great would have been the tragedy for him.

When I read about our Brethren of the past, I am overwhelmed with humility. Consider the Prophet Joseph Smith and the little opportunity he had for formal schooling. Read the letters written in his own hand, and you will know that he could not spell correctly. Oh, how grateful he must have been for a scribe. I have wept when I have contemplated what they accomplished with what little they had. I sense how grateful they were to those who stood by them.

To you who may have lost your way, come back! We know how that can happen; we have walked that path of research and study. Come help us!—you with your scholarship and your training, you with your bright, intelligent minds, you with your experience and with your academic degrees.

How grateful we are today for the many members who have special gifts and special training that they devote to the building up of the Church and kingdom of God and to the protecting of it.

May God bless you who so faithfully compile and teach the history of the Church and build the faith of those you teach. I bear witness that the gospel is true. The Church is His church. I pray that you may be inspired as you write and as you teach. May His Spirit be with you in rich abundance.

As you take your students over the trails of Church history in this dispensation, yours is the privilege to help them to see the miracle of the Restoration, the mantle that belongs to His servants, and to “see in every hour and in every moment of the existence of the Church . . . the overruling, almighty hand of [God]” (Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1904, p. 2).

As you write and as you teach Church history under the influence of His Spirit, one day you will come to know that you were not only spectators but a central part of it, for you are His Saints.

This testimony I leave, with my blessings, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE BIBLE, A SEALED BOOK

**ELDER BRUCE R.
MCCONKIE**

**OF THE QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES**

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I am pleased and honored to be here, and I pray for a rich outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all of us as we now



consider some matters of surpassing import where our work as teachers is concerned.

I shall speak about the sealed book, which contains many of the mysteries of the kingdom. These are things that are of great worth unto all who teach the gospel. My specific subject is the Bible, a sealed book, but my approach and handling of this subject may not fit the normal pattern.

There are many things that need to be said, and I shall speak plainly, hoping to edify and not to offend.

These rather well-known words may have some application to what I am about to say:

*To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his gods?*

(Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Horatius,” lines 219–24, in *The Lays of Ancient Rome*, 1842.)

There is a plainer translation, which I think, however, is either colloquial, or apocryphal, or pseudepigraphic. It is to this effect: Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. So be it.

Both Isaiah and John tell us about a book that is sealed. Isaiah’s prophecy speaks of taking words from the unsealed portion of the book to one of great learning, to a mighty tower of intellectual power, who asked to receive the book itself.

Being told that some two-thirds of the book was sealed, the intellectual giant, skilled in all the linguistic learning of the world, said, “I cannot read a sealed book” (Joseph Smith—History 1:65). This prophecy was fulfilled when Martin Harris took some of the characters, copied from the Book of Mormon plates, to Professor Charles Anthon in New York City (see Isaiah 29; 2 Nephi 27; Joseph Smith—History 1:63–65).

John the Revelator saw in the hands of the Great God a book sealed with seven seals. “It contains,” as our revelations tell us, “the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence” (D&C 77:6), each seal covering a period of one thousand years. As John saw, no one but the Lord Jesus—“the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David” (Revelation 5:5)—had the power to loose these seven seals.

This same knowledge is contained in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon. For aught we know the two sealed books are one and the same. Of this much we are quite certain: When, during the Millennium, the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon is translated, it will give an account of life in the premortal existence; of the creation of all things; of the Fall and the Atonement and the Second Coming; of temple ordinances, in their fulness; of the ministry and mission of translated beings; of life in the spirit world, in both paradise and hell; of the kingdoms of glory to be inhabited by resurrected beings; and many such like things.

As of now, the world is not ready to receive these truths. For one thing, these added doctrines will completely destroy the whole theory of organic evolution as it is now almost universally taught in the halls of academia. For

another, they will set forth an entirely different concept and time frame of the creation, both of this earth and all forms of life and of the sidereal heavens themselves, than is postulated in all the theories of men. And sadly, there are those who, if forced to make a choice at this time, would select Darwin over Deity.

Our purpose in referring to the sealed book or books spoken of by Isaiah and John is to set the stage for a consideration of the sealed book—the Holy Bible—that is now in our hands. As the Lord Jesus alone has power to loose the seven seals on John’s book, so the coming forth of the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon depends upon our faith and righteousness.

When we rend the damning veil of unbelief that now shuts us out from perfect communion with Gods and angels and when we gain faith like that of the brother of Jared, then we will gain the knowledge that was his. This will not occur until after the Lord comes. (See Ether 4.)

The Book of Mormon came forth and was translated by the gift and power of God. The scholarship and learning of wise men were not involved. It was not brought forth by intellectual giants who had been trained in all the linguistic wisdom of the world. It came forth by the power of the Holy Ghost. The translator said, “I am not learned” (2 Nephi 27:19). The Lord replied, “The learned shall not read” the account on the plates (2 Nephi 27:20).

There is a great key in this. The Book of Mormon is translated correctly because an unlearned man did it by the gift and power of God. It took him less than sixty translating days. The Bible abounds in errors and mistranslations, in spite of the fact that the most learned scholars and translators of the ages labored years on end over the manuscripts of antiquity to bring it forth.

The key to an understanding of Holy Writ lies not in the wisdom of men, not in cloistered halls, not in academic degrees, not in a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew—though special intellectual insights may result from all of these—but the things of God are known and understood only by the power of the Spirit of God (see I Corinthians 2). Thus saith the Lord: “I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised” to do my work (D&C 35:13).

How well Paul said: “Where is the wise: where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.” (I Corinthians 1:20, 25–27.)

Of course we should learn all we can in every field; we should sit with Paul at the feet of Gamaliel; we should gain a knowledge of kingdoms and countries and languages (see D&C 88:76–81). “To be learned is good,” Jacob tells us, *if* we “hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:29).

But above all this—more important than all of it combined, more important than all the wisdom ever gained by the power of the intellect by all the wise men of all the ages—above it all is the need for the guidance of the Spirit in our study and in our teaching. The way the Book of Mormon came forth—by the power of God, who used an unlearned man—sets the tone for all of us in all our work in the kingdom. The Lord can do his work through us if we will let him.

Now, it is my considered judgment, and I firmly believe, that the Bible as we now have it is a sealed book. It does not have the Jaredite seal, which can only be removed by faith and righteousness; the Bible is for men in our day, both the righteous and the wicked. And it is not sealed with seven seals but with two. These we shall name and show how they can be removed. The Bible should become an open book—a book that is read and believed and understood by all men on earth.

But first we must tell what the Bible is and show its relationship to gaining salvation and to other inspired writings. Everyone knows that the Bible is the book of books; that it is a volume of holy scripture; that it contains the mind and will and voice of the Lord to all men on earth; and that it has had a greater effect on the civilization of the world, up to this time, than any other book ever written.

There are no people on earth who hold the Bible in such high esteem as we do. We believe it, we read and ponder its sayings, we rejoice in the truths it teaches, and we seek to conform our lives to the divine standard it proclaims. But we do not believe, as does evangelical Christianity, that the Bible contains all things necessary for salvation; nor do we believe that God has now taken upon himself the tongue of the dumb which no longer speaks, nor reveals, nor makes known his will to his children.

Indeed, we know that the Bible contains only a sliver, a twig, a leaf, no more than a small branch at the most, from the great redwood of revelation that God has given in ages past. There has been given ten thousand times ten thousand more revelation than has been preserved for us in our present Bible. It contains a bucket, a small pail, a few draughts, no more than a small stream at most, out of the great ocean of revealed truth that has come to men in ages more spiritually enlightened than ours.

And even the small portion of truth preserved for us in our present Bible has not come down to us in its original

plainness and perfection. An angel told Nephi, with repetitive emphasis, that the Bible—including both the Old Testament and the New Testament—contained the knowledge of salvation when first written; that it then went through the hands “of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches” (1 Nephi 13:26); that many plain and precious parts and many covenants of the Lord were taken away; and that as a result an exceedingly great many did stumble and did not know what to believe or how to act. (See 1 Nephi 13.)

And yet, with all this, we cannot avoid the conclusion that a divine providence is directing all things as they should be. This means that the Bible, as it now is, contains that portion of the Lord’s word that a rebellious, wicked, and apostate world is entitled to and able to receive.

We doubt not also that the Bible, as now constituted, is given to test the faith of men. It prepares men for the Book of Mormon. Those who truly believe the Bible accept the Book of Mormon; those who believe the Book of Mormon accept the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price; and those so enlightened strive to live that they can receive the greater light and knowledge in those sealed books that are yet to come to light—those books, we repeat, which shall come forth from unlearned men as they are guided by the Holy Ghost.

Providentially the Bible is so written that all men, however slight their spiritual endowment may be, can gain truth and enlightenment from it, whereas those who have the power of discernment can learn from it the deep and hidden things reserved for the Saints alone.

By way of perspective, as far as gaining salvation is concerned, the Bible is far excelled—immeasurably so—by the Book of Mormon and the other latter-day revelations. These modern scriptures are in fact the ones that must be believed and accepted in order for us to be saved. If it came right down to it, those of us who live in the dispensation of the fulness of times could be saved if there were no Bible at all, because the gospel truths and powers have all been given anew to us by direct revelation.

Also by way of having all things in perspective, we should be aware that there are approved and inspired writings that are not in the standard works. These writings also are true and should be used along with the scriptures themselves in learning and teaching the gospel. Next to the standard works five of the greatest documents in our literature are—

1. The “Wentworth Letter.” (See *History of the Church*, 4:535–41.) Written by the Prophet Joseph Smith, it contains an account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas, of the organization of the Church in this dispensation, and

of the persecutions suffered by the early Latter-day Saints. The thirteen Articles of Faith are part of this letter.

2. *Lectures on Faith*. These lectures were prepared by and under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith and were taught by him and by others in the School of the Prophets. The Prophet said they embraced “the important doctrine[s] of salvation” (Preface to D&C, 1835 ed.; reprint, Independence, Mo.: Herald House, 1971).

3. *The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve*. (See James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75], 5:26–34; see also 5:23–25.) This exposition sets forth the status and relationship of the Father and the Son, shows those ways in which Christ is the Father, and through its various recitations lays to rest the false and heretical view that Adam is our Father and our God.

4. The “King Follett Sermon” and the “Sermon in the Grove.” (See *History of the Church*, 6:302–17; 6:473–79.) These two sermons, one in thought and content, set forth the doctrine of the plurality of Gods and of becoming joint heirs with Christ. They show that man may become as his Maker and reign in celestial exaltation forever.

5. “The Origin of Man,” by the First Presidency of the Church. (See Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:200–206; see also 4:199.) This inspired writing sets forth the official position of the Church on the origin of man and therefore impinges on the evolutionary fantasies of biologists and their fellow travelers. As might be expected, it arouses great animosity among intellectuals whose testimonies are more ethereal than real.

Now to our modern sealed book—the Holy Bible—the book that prepares men for the further light and knowledge the Lord has in store for them. What are the seals that hide its wonders from the world?

They are two in number and are the opposite extremes of a swinging pendulum. They are the seals of Satan and have been forged with devilish cleverness. In fact, I cannot think of two seals that could more effectively destroy the value and use of the Bible than these two. They are the seal of ignorance and the seal of intellectuality. A word about each is in order.

As to the seal of ignorance—this seal kept the Bible away from almost every living soul on earth for nearly fifteen hundred years. If ever there was a sealed book, it was the Bible all during the Dark Ages. The dominant church neither used it nor taught it but followed instead the traditions of the Fathers, hence such doctrines as the three-in-one spirit God; the worship of Mary and images; the intercession of saints; masses for the salvation of the living and the dead; the sale of indulgences; purgatory; infant baptism; the justifying of the persecution and

slaying of heretics, as in the Spanish Inquisition; and so on—for none of which is there one shred of proper scriptural justification.

The Renaissance and the Reformation that grew out of it were, in large measure, movements to translate and use the Bible. Many is the truth seeker who was burned at the stake for the mere possession of an unauthorized Bible. We need not dwell more on this. There are shelves of books in every good library that tell the dire and dark story.

Today the seal of ignorance remains only insofar as the generality of Christendom, and the rest of the world in general, have no real interest in studying the Bible. Modern ministers are sociologists, not theologians. And in Catholic nations there is almost no encouragement or incentive to own or read the biblical word.

As to the seal of intellectuality—this is quite another matter. It is imposed, no doubt unwittingly in many cases, by “the wise, and the learned, . . . who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom”—these are Jacob’s words—and who do not know they are thereby numbered with those “whom” the Holy One of Israel “despiseth” (2 Nephi 9:42).

We shall show the fallacy of relying on learning and intellectuality, rather than upon the Spirit and upon an overall understanding of the plan of salvation, as we now set forth the keys of understanding that will enable us to remove the seals from the sealed Bible.

Some of these keys of understanding are of almost infinite import; others are so insignificant that if they are ignored, no one will ever miss them. Even these insignificant ones, however, must be mentioned so as to keep the important items in perspective. We shall take the liberty of rating each key on a scale of one to ten.

And so we say of the Bible, as Parley P. Pratt said of the Book of Mormon: “Remove the seals; be wide unfurled / Its light and glory to the world” (“An Angel from on High,” *Hymns* [1948], no. 224).

KEY ONE: READ THE BIBLE

Could any key be more obvious than this? Simply read the book itself. Unless and until we do, nothing else will fall into place. We cannot do other than rate this key as a ten on our scale. All biblical scholarship and understanding begin with reading the basic source material.

One of our problems is that we read what others have said about the Bible; we read a book of Old Testament stories; we get something the *Reader’s Digest* publishes under the biblical name that leaves out the genealogies and supposedly hard parts.

Read the book itself. “Search the scriptures” (John 5:39). Treasure up the Lord’s word. Go to the source. The words are sacred. Insofar as they have come down to us as originally penned, they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. They are to be read over and over again as long as we live.

But in my opinion they are not all of equal worth. The Gospels, particularly the Gospel of John, are worth their weight in gold. Acts is not far behind them. Paul’s epistles, Romans being the chief and Philemon the least, are treasure houses of doctrine and wise counsel. The writings of Peter and James, plus 1 John, rank as though written by angels; 2 and 3 John are of no special moment; Jude is worthwhile, at least; and for those with gospel understanding, Revelation is a foundation of divine wisdom that expands the mind and enlightens the soul.

In the Old Testament, Genesis is the book of books—a divine account whose worth cannot be measured. Exodus and Deuteronomy are also of surpassing worth. Numbers, Joshua, Judges, the Samuels, the Kings, and the Chronicles are all essential history, interwoven with deeds of faith and wonder that form a background for an understanding of the Christian faith. Leviticus has no special application to us and, except for a few passages, need not give us permanent concern. Ruth and Esther are lovely stories that are part of our heritage. The Psalms contain marvelous poetry, and the portions that are messianic and that speak of the last days and the Second Coming are of great import. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations are interesting books; Job is for people who like the book of Job; and the Song of Solomon is biblical trash—it is not inspired writing. Ezra, Nehemiah, Obadiah, and Jonah are the least of the prophets; and all the rest of the prophets—Isaiah above them all—each in his place and order set forth the doctrinal and prophetic word that must be studied in depth.

KEY TWO: KNOW HEBREW AND GREEK

There is certainly no objection to knowing Hebrew and Greek, but it does have some hazards. Joseph Smith and some of our early Brethren studied some Hebrew. When a knowledge of ancient languages is used properly—as a means of gaining inspiration about particular passages—it merits a rating of, say, one or one and two-tenths. Improperly used—as an end in itself—its value sinks off the scale to a minus five or a minus ten, depending upon the attitude and spiritual outlook of the user.

Those who turn to the original tongues for their doctrinal knowledge have a tendency to rely on scholars rather than on prophets for scriptural interpretations. This is perilous; it is a sad thing to be numbered with the wise and the learned who know more than the Lord.

Certainly none of us should be troubled or feel inferior if we do not have a working knowledge of the languages in

which the Bible was first written. Our concern is to be guided by the Spirit and to interpret the ancient word in harmony with latter-day revelation.

KEY THREE: USE BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES AND DICTIONARIES

Anything to be said under this heading is more of a warning than an endorsement. On historical and geographical matters, these uninspired writings rate as one or two; on doctrinal matters they drop off the scale to a minus ten, a minus one hundred, a minus one thousand, depending on the doctrine.

The wise and the learned know so infinitesimally little about doctrine that it is almost a waste of time to read them. All their creeds are an abomination in the Lord’s sight. They teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They twist and pervert the scriptures to conform to their traditions; and if they get anything right, it is an accident.

One says Jesus did not walk on the water, for that is impossible; rather, he waded in the surf.

Another says He did not feed the five thousand by multiplying loaves and fishes, for that is contrary to all nature; rather, many in the congregation carried food in their knapsacks but were afraid to take it out lest they would have to share it with others. Jesus merely taught them to share.

Yet another says we need not look for the Second Coming in the literal sense, for surely Christ is no longer a man who can dwell again among men; rather, the Second Coming takes place whenever Christ dwells in the heart of a man.

What can the commentaries of the world teach us about the personal nature of God; about the premortal existence, the war in heaven, and the eternal plan of salvation; about the fall of man with its temporal and spiritual death; about the paradisiacal creation that is to be restored during the Millennium; about the Melchizedek Priesthood and its various offices; about the literal gathering of Israel and the restoration of the ten tribes upon the mountains of Israel; about the preaching to the spirits in prison and the doctrine of salvation for the dead; about temples and celestial marriage and the continuation of the family unit in eternity; about gifts and signs and miracles; about a universal apostasy, a glorious day of restoration, and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; about the atonement of Christ, which makes salvation available on conditions of obedience; about the three degrees of glory; about exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world where men will be joint heirs with Christ; about almost every basic doctrine of salvation?

My fellow teachers, all these things, and ten thousand more, have come from God in heaven to us in this final

dispensation of grace by direct revelation. They are the truths that make salvation available, and they are not to be found in the tomes of the scholars of the world.

KEY FOUR: LEARN OF LOCAL CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

This has some considerable advantage. It rates a two or a three. The words of scripture often take on a new and added meaning when read in the light of the local conditions that called them forth.

When we learn that the counsel of Jesus to beware of false prophets, who come to us in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves, had reference to the rabbis and scribes and Pharisees of his day, we realize that its modern application is to the ministers of false churches who teach false doctrines.

When we learn that the call of the meek Nazarene to come unto him, take his yoke upon them, and learn of him, for his yoke was easy and his burden light, and he would give them rest to their souls, was an invitation to leave the ritualistic, formalistic, burdensome performances of the Mosaic law and to accept the simplicity of gospel worship, it places an entirely new light on the call to leave the sin-laden burdens of the world and accept the holy gospel.

When we learn that every group of travelers in Palestine camped out at caravanserais, in which rooms called inns surrounded a courtyard where their animals were tethered, we get an entirely new vision of the place where the Lord Jesus was born.

When we read that Jesus excoriated the Jewish teachers because their traditions made the law of God of none effect, that he arraigned them for their utterly inane Sabbath restrictions, that he condemned them for their ceremonial acts of washings and purifyings, it is of considerable help to know what the traditions, the restrictions, and the ceremonial acts were.

Nephi quotes "the words of Isaiah" and says "they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy" (2 Nephi 25:4). As a supplemental way of understanding the words of the prophets, he says men must be "taught after the manner of the things of the Jews" (2 Nephi 25:5).

Authors such as Edersheim, Farrar, and Geike, writing more than a hundred years ago when men had more faith and when they believed in the divine sonship, give us much good data on these ancient customs and ways of life.

KEY FIVE: STUDY ALL SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT

The context of every passage of scripture is important: let us rate it as a two or a three on our scale. God is no respecter of persons. Anything he has or will say to one person, he will say to another who is similarly situated.

And he may give what seem to be conflicting commands to different persons differently situated.

If the scripture says, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13), what is to stop the Lord from telling Nephi to slay Laban as that Jewish leader lies in a drunken stupor? If the scripture says members of the Church who commit murder are denied eternal life, does this apply also to the heathen nations? If we need a passage to teach the separation of Church and state, will we find it in the Old Testament when the people were ruled theocratically or in the New Testament when they were required to render unto Caesar the things that were his? If we are studying Levitical performances, will we turn to the Book of Mormon, among which people there were no Levites? And so on and so on. Obviously scriptures have limited or general application according to the context.

KEY SIX: RIGHTLY DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE PASSAGES

This is difficult to do, it requires considerable experience and discernment, and it surely rates as a three or a four. In general we are safer in taking things literally, although the scriptures abound in figurative matters.

Literal occurrences include speaking with God face to face as a man speaketh with his friend; man's being made in the image of God, both physically and spiritually; the coming of Christ as the Only Begotten in the flesh; the Lord Jesus himself dwelling in Enoch's Zion; His personal reign during the Millennium; the resurrection of all men from the dead with corporeal bodies of flesh and bones; and so on.

Figurative matters include Enoch's walking with God, the Lord Jehovah dwelling with ancient Israel, Christ being the living bread that came down from heaven, eating his flesh and drinking his blood in the sacramental ordinance, and so on.

KEY SEVEN: USE THE KING JAMES VERSION OF THE BIBLE

As far as the Bibles of the world are concerned, the King James Version is so far ahead of all others that there is little comparison. It rates as an item of five or six on our scale. It is the Bible that came into being to prepare the way for the translation of the Book of Mormon and to set a literary pattern and standard for the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is the official Bible of the Church. Reference might well be made to *Why the King James Version?* by President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1956) for an extensive consideration of this matter.

KEY EIGHT: WHAT OF THE OTHER TRANSLATIONS OF THE WORLD?

In answer we say: Forget them; they are of so little value that it is almost a waste of time to delve into them. We take a generous view to even rate them as one on our scale. They are not binding upon us, and in general they simply set forth the religious predilections of their translator. Some, for instance, have Christ born of a young woman rather than a virgin.

There may be an occasional instance in which one of these alien translations throws some light on a particular point; they are not all bad, but there are so many things to study and learn that I question the wisdom of treasuring up the translation views of the wise and the learned who really have nothing in the inspired sense to contribute to an understanding of eternal truth.

KEY NINE: USE AND RELY ON THE JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION, THE SO-CALLED INSPIRED VERSION

This counsel rates an eight or a nine. It can scarcely be stated with too great an emphasis. The Joseph Smith Translation, or Inspired Version, is a thousand times over the best Bible now existing on earth. It contains all that the King James Version does, plus pages of additions and corrections and an occasional deletion. It was made by the spirit of revelation, and the changes and additions are the equivalent of the revealed word in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

For historical and other reasons there have been, among some members of the Church in times past, some prejudice and misunderstanding of the place of the Joseph Smith Translation. I hope this has now all vanished away. The Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible footnotes many of the major changes made in the Inspired Version and has a seventeen-page section that sets forth excerpts that are too lengthy for inclusion in the footnotes.

Reference to this section and to the footnotes themselves will give anyone who has spiritual insight a deep appreciation of this revelatory work of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is one of the great evidences of his prophetic call.

And I am pleased to say that here at Brigham Young University we have the world's foremost authority on the Joseph Smith Translation. His contributions in this field of gospel scholarship rank with the best works published in our dispensation. He is of course Brother Robert J. Matthews, the dean of Religious Education. His published work, *"A Plainer Translation": Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, a History and Commentary* (Provo: Brigham Young Univ. Press, 1975), is deserving of your careful study.

KEY TEN: USE THE TEACHING AIDS IN THE LDS EDITION OF THE BIBLE

I received a letter from a seminary teacher in which he criticized our new scriptural publications because they had footnotes, cross-references, and teaching aids. He argued that these were crutches which kept people from that intensive study in which they would make their own cross-references.

Well, I for one need these crutches and recommend them to you. They include the Joseph Smith Translation items, the chapter headings, the topical guide, the Bible dictionary, the footnotes, the gazetteer, and the maps.

None of these are perfect; they do not of themselves determine doctrine; there have been and undoubtedly now are mistakes in them. Cross-references, for instance, do not establish and never were intended to prove that parallel passages so much as pertain to the same subject. They are aids and helps only. Certainly they rate a four or five in importance. Use them consistently.

KEY ELEVEN: USE INSPIRED AND INTERPRETING TRANSLATIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES

It seems to me that most of us are almost unaware of the great enlightenment that is available to us from inspired and interpreting translations of biblical passages. For those with spiritual insight, these inspired interpretations rate an eight or nine on our scale; for those with less spiritual maturity, all they do is raise doubts and questions.

As all of you know, almost every New Testament quotation of an Old Testament scripture varies from the original Hebrew text as it has been translated in our Bible. Why? There are two reasons. One reason is that many quotations came from the Greek Septuagint and not from the Hebrew text that has become our Old Testament. The Septuagint had many deficiencies because it incorporated the doctrinal views of the translators.

More important, the Jews in the days of Jesus spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew, but their scriptures were written in Hebrew. Hence, it was the practice in their synagogue worship for one teacher to read texts from the Hebrew and for another to translate or paraphrase these passages into Aramaic—or as they said, make these passages *targums*—so they could be understood by the people.

When these Targums were made by Jesus and the Apostles, all of whom taught regularly and consistently in the synagogues, they were inspired and hence throw great floods of light upon whatever scripture is involved. Many Old Testament passages take on new meanings because of the way they are quoted in the New Testament.

For all practical purposes Nephi often did much the same thing when quoting Isaiah or Zenos. He gave, not a

literal, but an inspired and interpreting translation. And in many instances his words give either a new or a greatly expanded meaning to the original prophetic word.

As a matter of fact, Moroni did this same thing in his 1823 appearances to Joseph Smith. For instance, he so improved upon the promise of Elijah's return that it is like stepping from a pleasant twilight into the brilliance of the noonday sun. And yet years later, with a full knowledge of the more perfect translation, Joseph Smith retained the King James language in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants and his inspired rendition of the Bible.

Surely there is a message here. For one thing, it means that the same passage of scripture can be translated correctly in more ways than one and that the translation used depends upon the spiritual maturity of the people.

Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Mormon preserves, with a few improvements, the language of the King James Version of the Bible. But later, the Joseph Smith Translation renders much of this sermon in a way that excels even the Book of Mormon.

So simple a passage as John 17:3 has a limited meaning for all men, but it is a celestial beacon of blazing light to us. From it we learn that to know God and Christ is to be like them—thinking what they think, speaking what they speak, doing what they do—all of which knowledge is beyond the capacity of an unenlightened mind to receive.

As rapidly as we learn the plan of salvation and get ourselves in tune with the Holy Spirit, the scriptures will take on an entirely new meaning for us. No longer will we be limited, as are the small minds of the worldly wise, but our whole souls will be filled with light and understanding beyond anything of which we can now conceive.

KEY TWELVE: MODERN SCRIPTURE UNVEILS THE ANCIENT SCRIPTURE

I cannot lay too much stress on this key. It rates a ten or more. In the real and true sense of the word, the only way to understand the Bible is first to gain a knowledge of God's dealings with men through latter-day revelation.

We could be saved without the Bible, but we cannot be saved without latter-day revelation. Ours is a restored kingdom. The doctrines, laws, ordinances, and powers were all restored. God and angels gave them anew. We believe what we believe, and have the truths we possess, and exercise the keys and powers in us vested, because they have come by the opening of the heavens in our day. We do not look back to a dead day or a past people for salvation.

As it happens—it could not be otherwise with an unchangeable God—what we have conforms to what the ancient Saints had. Any agreeing truths and practices they had stand as a second and supplemental witness of gospel verities. But our knowledge and powers come directly from heaven.

Hence, the imperfect and partial accounts of the Lord's dealings with his ancient Saints, as found in the Bible, must conform to and be read in harmony with what we have received. It is time we learned, not that the Book of Mormon is true because the Bible is true, but just the reverse. The Bible is true, insofar as it is, because the Book of Mormon is true.

The everlasting gospel; the eternal priesthood; the identical ordinances of salvation and exaltation; the never-varying doctrines of salvation; the same Church and kingdom; the keys of the kingdom, which alone can seal men up unto eternal life—all these have always been the same in all ages; and it shall be so everlastingly on this earth and all earths to all eternity. These things we know by latter-day revelation.

Once we know these things, the door is open to an understanding of the fragmentary slivers of information in the Bible. By combining the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, we have at least a thousand passages that let us know what prevailed among the Lord's people in the Old World.

Did they have the fulness of the everlasting gospel at all times? Yes. There was not a period of ten minutes from the days of Adam to the appearing of the Lord Jesus in the land Bountiful when the gospel—as we have it, in its eternal fulness—was not on earth.

Do not let the fact that the performances of the Mosaic law were administered by the Aaronic Priesthood confuse you on this matter. Where the Melchizedek Priesthood is, there is the fulness of the gospel; and all of the prophets held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Was there baptism in the days of ancient Israel? The answer is in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible and in the Book of Mormon. The record of the first six hundred years of Nephite history is simply a true and plain account of how things were in ancient Israel from the days of Moses downward.

Was there a Church anciently, and if so, how was it organized and regulated? There was not so much as the twinkling of an eye during the whole so-called pre-Christian Era when the Church of Jesus Christ was not upon the earth, organized basically in the same way it now is. Melchizedek belonged to the Church; Laban was a member; so also was Lehi, long before he left Jerusalem.

There was always apostolic power. The Melchizedek Priesthood always directed the course of the Aaronic Priesthood. All of the prophets held a position in the hierarchy of the day. Celestial marriage has always existed. Indeed, such is the heart and core of the Abrahamic covenant. Elias and Elijah came to restore this ancient order and to give the sealing power, which gives it eternal efficacy.

People ask, Did they have the gift of the Holy Ghost before the day of Pentecost? As the Lord lives, they were so endowed—such is part of the gospel—and those so gifted wrought miracles and sought and obtained a city whose builder and maker is God.

I have often wished the history of ancient Israel could have passed through the editing and prophetic hands of Mormon. If so, it would read like the Book of Mormon, but I suppose that was the way it read in the first instance anyway.

GENERAL KEY: PONDER, PRAY, AND SEEK THE SPIRIT

This is the conclusion of the whole matter. This key removes the seal. This is the only way the pure and sweet and hidden truths of the Bible may be known in full. And it is rated above all others.

We all know that we must treasure up the words of life; that we must live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God; that we must ponder the things of righteousness by day and, with Nephi, water our pillows by night—all as we let the solemnities of eternity sink into our souls.

We all know we must ask the Lord for guidance and enlightenment. “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened” (D&C 4:7). “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

“And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). For, “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:20–21.)

Now, much more might be said; we have but opened the door to investigation. However great the darkness may be in the world among the wise and the learned, we need not be confused nor uncertain. The gospel trump sounds no uncertain tones. We have power to remove the seals from the sealed book and to bask in the light that shines forth from its pages.

May I, by way of conclusion, doctrine, and testimony, give you four simple directions:

1. Teach from the source. Use the scriptures themselves; our tendency often is to study texts about the Bible rather than to take the divine word in its purity.

Streams of living water flow from the Eternal Fountain, and they flow in scriptural channels prepared by the prophets. Here is a bit of wisdom most of you will understand: Don’t drink below the horses, particularly the horses of sectarianism.

2. Teach doctrine in preference to ethics. Read again your instructions as given by President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in *The Charted Course of the Church in Education* (address delivered to religious educators, 8 Aug. 1938; see also *Charge to Religious Educators* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981]). As he sets forth, if we teach ethics and nothing more, we fail; if we teach the great and eternal doctrines of salvation, we succeed, and the ethical principles will thereby take care of themselves.

3. Teach by the Spirit. This is axiomatic. It has been true from the beginning and will be so everlastingly. Have you caught the vision of that great proclamation made in the Adamic day as to how and in what manner the gospel must be preached?

The scripture saith: “Believe on his Only Begotten Son, even him whom he declared should come in the meridian of time, who was prepared from before the foundation of the world” (Moses 5:57). That is, believe in Christ and conform to the great and eternal plan of salvation.

Then come these words: “And thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Moses 5:58).

The gospel is and must be and can only be taught by the gift of the Holy Ghost. That gift is given to us as the Saints of the Most High and to none other. We stand alone and have a power the world does not possess. Our views on religious and spiritual matters are infinitely better than theirs because we have the inspiration of heaven.

This is the reason the call to teach, the call to be a teacher—and I speak now of teachers of both sexes—is the third greatest position in the church. Truly Paul said: “God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28). Apostles, prophets, teachers—in that order. Then the moving of mountains and the raising of the dead.

Apostles and prophets are also teachers, and what greater commission can anyone have from the Lord than to stand in His place and stand, saying what he would say if he personally were present, and doing it because the words uttered flow forth by the power of the Holy Ghost?

4. Become a gospel scholar. With such a great commission, how can we do other than become gospel scholars and then so live as to enable the Spirit to draw from our acquired treasures of truth those portions needed in the very hour?

In the very nature of things every teacher becomes an interpreter of the scriptures to his hearers. It could not be otherwise. We are to preach, teach, expound, and exhort. But our explanations must be in harmony with prophetic and apostolic utterances, and they will be if they are guided by the Spirit. Remember that these are the chief officers placed in the Church to see that we are not “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

Now, one final word: In the Church we are all brethren; the Lord is no respecter of persons; it is not a church position that saves but obedience and personal righteousness.

The gospel has been restored so “that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of

the world” (D&C 1:20). We are all entitled to the spirit of inspiration. As the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 149).

The gifts of the Spirit are available to all of us. Indeed, it is our privilege—the privilege of every elder in the kingdom—to strip ourselves of jealousies and fears, and to humble ourselves before the Lord, until “the veil shall be rent” and we shall see him and know that he is (D&C 67:10).

The work is true; the Lord’s hand is in it; it will come off triumphant. And all of us who do our part will receive peace and joy in this life and be inheritors of eternal life in the world to come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

UNITY

PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK JR.

FIRST COUNSELOR IN THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Excerpt from Conference Report, April 1950, 180

I say to you again, brethren, as I have said every priesthood meeting night for years, that if you are united, if you will act as one man in carrying out the purposes of the Lord, there is absolutely nothing that can withstand your power.



LOYALTY

An essential part of unity is loyalty. There can be no union where loyalty does not exist. Loyalty is a pretty difficult quality to possess. It requires the ability to put away selfishness, greed, ambition and all of the baser qualities of the human mind. You cannot be loyal unless you are willing to surrender. There is no growth, mental, physical or spiritual, unless there be some curtailment, some sacrifice may I say, on the part of him who would be loyal. His own preferences and desires must be put away, and he must see only the great purpose which lies out ahead.

UNITY—A PRINCIPLE OF STRENGTH

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

FIRST COUNSELOR IN THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Excerpt from Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of George Q. Cannon, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. (1957–74), 1:207

I suppose each of us is fond of having his own way. I know I am. . . . But I do not



like my own way well enough to want it in opposition to my brethren’s way. That is our duty as the First Presidency of the Church. It is the duty of every presidency throughout the Church. . . .

Suppose that one man has more wisdom than another; it is better to carry out a plan that is not so wise, if you are united on it. Speaking generally, a plan or a policy that may be inferior in some respects is more effective if men are united upon it than a better plan would be upon which they were divided.

TIMING

ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

*In Brigham Young University
2001–2002 Speeches (2002),
187–93*

The most significant academic talks I heard during my service at BYU had one common characteristic. Instead of providing new facts or advocating a particular position, as many lectures do, the most significant talks changed the listeners' way of thinking about an important subject. Though I am a devotional speaker rather than a lecturer on an academic subject, I am going to make that same attempt today. I will attempt to change some listeners' ways of thinking about an important subject—the matter of *timing*.

I begin with a story I heard many years ago at the inauguration of a university president. It illustrates the importance of timing in university administration. One university president had come to the end of his period of service, and another was just beginning. As a gesture of goodwill, the wise outgoing president handed his young successor three sealed envelopes. "Hold these until you have the first crisis in your administration," he explained. "Then open the first one, and you will find some valuable advice."

It was a year before the new president had a crisis. When he opened the first envelope, he found a single sheet of paper on which were written the words "Blame the prior administration." He followed that advice and survived the crisis.

Two years later he faced another serious challenge to his leadership. He opened the second envelope and read: "Reorganize your administration." He did so, and the reorganization disarmed his critics and gave new impetus to his leadership.

Much later the now-seasoned president encountered his third major crisis. Eagerly he opened the last envelope, anticipating the advice that would provide the solution for his troubles. Again he found a single sheet of paper, but this time it read, "Prepare three envelopes." It was time for new leadership.

The familiar observation that "timing is everything" surely overstates the point, but timing *is* vital. We read in Ecclesiastes:

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:



"A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; . . .

"A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; . . .

"[A] time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

"[A] time to keep silence, and a time to speak."
[Ecclesiastes 3:1–2, 4–5, 7]

In all the important decisions in our lives, what is most important is to *do the right thing*. Second, and only slightly behind the first, is to *do the right thing at the right time*. People who do the right thing at the wrong time can be frustrated and ineffective. They can even be confused about whether they made the right choice when what was wrong was not their choice but their timing.

I. THE LORD'S TIMING

My first point on the subject of timing is that the Lord has His own timetable. "My words are sure and shall not fail," the Lord taught the early elders of this dispensation. "But," He continued, "all things must come to pass in their time" (D&C 64:31–32).

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith means trust—trust in God's will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable. We should not try to impose our timetable on His. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said:

"The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best? The same is true with the second coming and with all those matters wherein our faith needs to include faith in the Lord's timing for us personally, not just in His overall plans and purposes." [*Even As I Am* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 93]

More recently, during last April conference, Elder Maxwell said: "Since faith in the timing of the Lord may be tried, let us learn to say not only, 'Thy will be done,' but patiently also, 'Thy timing be done'" (*CR*, April 2001, 76; or "Plow in Hope," *Ensign*, May 2001, 59).

Indeed, we cannot have true faith in the Lord without also having complete trust in the Lord's will and in the Lord's timing.

Among the persons who violate this principle are those who advocate euthanasia. They are trying to take an essential matter that we understand to be determined only by God and accelerate its occurrence according to their own will or preference.

In our service in the Lord's church we should remember that *when* is just as important as *who*, *what*, *where*, and *how*.

For a vivid illustration of the importance of timing we can look to the earthly ministry of the Lord and His succeeding instructions to His Apostles. During His lifetime the Lord instructed the Twelve Apostles not to preach to the Gentiles but “rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5–6; also see Matthew 15:22–26). Then, at the appropriate time, this instruction was reversed in a great revelation to the Apostle Peter. Only then, at the precise time dictated by the Lord, was the gospel taken to the Gentiles (see Acts 10–11).

As this example shows, continuing revelation is the means by which the Lord administers His timing. We need that revelatory direction. For example, many of us or our descendants will doubtless participate in the fulfillment of prophecies about the building of the city of New Jerusalem (see D&C 84:2–4). But in this matter the timing is the Lord’s, not ours. We will not be approved or blessed in clearing the ground or pouring the footings for that great project until the Lord has said that it is time. In this, as in so many other things, the Lord will proceed in His own time and in His own way.

We prepare in the way the Lord has directed. We hold ourselves in readiness to act on the Lord’s timing. He will tell us when the time is right to take the next step. For now, we simply concentrate on our own assignments and on what we have been asked to do today. In this we are also mindful of the Lord’s assurance: “I will hasten my work in its time” (D&C 88:73).

People who do not accept continuing revelation sometimes get into trouble by doing things too soon or too late or too long. The practice of polygamy is an example.

The importance of the Lord’s timing is also evident in His dietary laws. The Lord gave one dietary direction to ancient Israel. Much later, because of the “evils and designs” that exist in these “last days” (D&C 89:4), He has given us a Word of Wisdom suited to the circumstances of our time, accompanied by the promised blessings we need in our time.

The Lord’s timing also applies to the important events of our personal lives. A great scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants declares that a particular spiritual experience will come to us “in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will” (D&C 88:68). This principle applies to revelation (see Oaks, “Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign*, March 1997, 11) and to all of the most important events in our lives: birth, marriage, death, and even our moves from place to place.

Here is an example from the life of a prominent pioneer ancestor of many in this audience. Anson Call was in the initial exodus from Nauvoo. He and his family crossed Iowa in the spring of 1846 and reached Council Bluffs, Iowa, that summer. There Brigham Young was organizing

wagon companies. He appointed Anson Call captain of the first 10 wagons. The Twelve ordered his wagon train to move west. It left the Missouri River for the West on July 22, 1846. Organized by priesthood authority, they were directed toward the Rocky Mountains, and they went westward with great energy.

After traveling more than 130 miles through what is now Nebraska, this first wagon train was overtaken by new instructions directing them not to proceed further that season. They found a place to winter, and then, in the spring of 1847, returned east and rejoined the main body of the Church on the Iowa side of the Missouri. There Anson Call and his family remained for a year, making further preparations and helping others prepare for the trip west. It was two years after their initial start westward in 1846 that Anson Call and his family finally journeyed to the valleys of the mountains. There the obedient and resourceful Anson Call was frequently used by Brigham Young to begin new settlements in the Intermountain West. (See *The Journal of Anson Call* [United States: Ethan L. Call and Christine Shaffer Call; Afton, Wyoming: Shann L. Call, 1986], 36.)

What is the meaning of this pioneer experience? It is not enough that we are under call, or even that we are going in the right direction. The timing must be right, and if the time is not right, our actions should be adjusted to the Lord’s timetable as revealed by His servants.

The Lord’s timing is often revealed in this way. Several years ago President Hinckley announced the construction of a large number of new temples, essentially doubling the number of operating temples of the Church from about 50 to about 100 in just a few years. Having additional temples has always been the direction to go, but until the prophet of the Lord signaled this as a major initiative, no one could have properly urged such a sudden and dramatic increase for the Church and its people. Only the Lord’s prophet could move the whole Church west. Only the Lord’s prophet could signal the Church to double its operating temples in just a few years.

In my conference talk last October I gave another illustration—the importance of following the Lord’s timing with those we try to interest in hearing the gospel message. Proclaiming the gospel is His work, not ours, and therefore it must be done on His timing, not ours. There are nations in the world today that must hear the gospel before the Lord will come again. We know this, but we cannot force it. We must wait upon the Lord’s timing. He will tell us, and He will open the doors or bring down the walls when the time is right. We should pray for the Lord’s help and directions so that we can be instruments in His hands to proclaim the gospel to nations and persons who are now ready—persons He would have us help today. The Lord loves

all of His children, and He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when groups or individuals are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His timetable for sharing His gospel with them.

II. THE AGENCY OF OTHERS

The achievement of some important goals in our lives is subject to more than the timing of the Lord. Some personal achievements are also subject to the agency of others. This is particularly evident in two matters of special importance to young people of college age—missionary baptisms and marriage.

Last summer Sister Oaks and I were in Manaus, Brazil. I spoke to about a hundred missionaries in that great city on the Amazon. As I stood to speak, I was prompted to put aside some notes I usually use on such occasions and substitute some thoughts on the importance of timing—some of the scriptures and principles I have been talking about today.

I reminded the missionaries that some of our most important plans cannot be brought to pass without the agency and actions of others. A missionary cannot baptize five persons this month without the agency and action of five other persons. A missionary can plan and work and do all within his or her power, but the desired result will depend upon the additional agency and action of others. Consequently a missionary's goals ought to be based upon the missionary's personal agency and action, not upon the agency or action of others.

But this is not the time to elaborate on what I told the missionaries about goals. Instead I will share some other applications of the principle of timing, giving illustrations from our personal lives.

III. APPLICATIONS TO OUR LIVES

Someone has said that life is what happens to us while we are making other plans. Because of things over which we have no control, we cannot plan and bring to pass everything we desire in our lives. Many important things will occur in our lives that we have not planned, and not all of them will be welcome. The tragic events of September 11th and their revolutionary consequences provide an obvious example. Even our most righteous desires may elude us, or come in different ways or at different times than we have sought to plan.

For example, we cannot be sure that we will marry as soon as we desire. A marriage that is timely in our view may be our blessing or it may not. My wife Kristen is an example. She did not marry until many years after her mission and her graduation. Older singles have some interesting experiences. While she was at her sister's place to

celebrate her fiftieth birthday, her sister's husband shared something he had just read in a newspaper. "Kristen," he said, "now that you are a single woman over 50, your chances of marrying are not as good as your chances of being killed by a terrorist."

The timing of marriage is perhaps the best example of an extremely important event in our lives that is almost impossible to plan. Like other important mortal events that depend on the agency of others or the will and timing of the Lord, marriage cannot be anticipated or planned with certainty. We can and should work for and pray for our righteous desires, but, despite this, many will remain single well beyond their desired time for marriage.

So what should be done in the meantime? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ prepares us for whatever life brings. This kind of faith prepares us to deal with life's opportunities—to take advantage of those that are received and to persist through the disappointments of those that are lost. In the exercise of that faith we should commit ourselves to the priorities and standards we will follow on matters we do not control and persist faithfully in those commitments whatever happens to us because of the agency of others or the timing of the Lord. When we do this, we will have a constancy in our lives that will give us direction and peace. Whatever the circumstances beyond our control, our commitments and standards can be constant.

Sometimes our commitments will surface at unexpected times and be applied in unexpected circumstances. Sometimes the principles we have taught to others come back to guide our own actions when we think we don't need them anymore. A personal experience illustrates this reality. Most Latter-day Saint parents know the importance of giving their children reminders as they go out on a date. I did this with our children, and I think they heeded my counsel. During the time I was getting acquainted with Kristen, when I left the house to meet her, one of my children said to me with a twinkle in the eye: "Now Dad, remember who you are!"

The commitments and service of adult singles can anchor them through the difficult years of waiting for the right time and the right person. Their commitments and service can also inspire and strengthen others. The poet John Greenleaf Whittier wrote of this in his wonderful poem "Snow-Bound," which contains this description of a dear aunt who never married:

*The sweetest woman ever Fate
Perverse denied a household mate,
Who, lonely, homeless, not the less
Found peace in love's unselfishness,
And welcome whereso'er she went,
A calm and gracious element.*

[John Greenleaf Whittier, “Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyl,” in *Snow-Bound: Among the Hills: Songs of Labor: and Other Poems* (Boston; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), lines 352–57]

Wise are those who make this commitment: *I will put the Lord first in my life and I will keep His commandments*. The performance of that commitment is within everyone’s control. We can fulfill that commitment without regard to what others decide to do, and that commitment will anchor us no matter what timing the Lord directs for the most important events in our lives.

Do you see the difference between committing to what *you will do*, in contrast to trying to plan that you will be married by the time you graduate or that you will earn at least X amount of dollars on your first job?

If we have faith in God and if we are committed to the fundamentals of keeping His commandments and putting Him first in our lives, we do not need to plan every single event—even every important event—and we should not feel rejected or depressed if some things—even some very important things—do not happen at the time we had planned or hoped or prayed.

Commit yourself to put the Lord first in your life, keep His commandments, and do what the Lord’s servants ask you to do. Then your feet are on the pathway to eternal life. Then it does not matter whether you are called to be a bishop or a Relief Society president, whether you are married or single, or whether you die tomorrow. You do not know what will happen. Do your best on what is fundamental and personal and then trust in the Lord and His timing.

Life has some strange turns. I will share some personal experiences that illustrate this.

When I was a young man I thought I would serve a mission. I graduated from high school in June 1950. Thousands of miles away, one week after that high school graduation, a North Korean army crossed the 38th parallel, and our country was at war. I was 17 years old, but as a member of the Utah National Guard I was soon under orders to prepare for mobilization and active service. Suddenly, for me and for many other young men of my generation, the full-time mission we had planned or assumed was not to be.

Another example: After I served as president of BYU for nine years, I was released. A few months later the governor of the state of Utah appointed me to a 10-year term on the supreme court of this state. I was then 48 years old. My wife June and I tried to plan the rest of our lives. We wanted to serve the full-time mission neither of us had been privileged to serve. We planned that I would serve 20 years on the state supreme court. Then, at the end of two 10-year terms, when I would be nearly 69 years old,

I would retire from the supreme court and we would submit our missionary papers and serve a mission as a couple.

I had my 69th birthday last summer and was vividly reminded of that important plan. If things had gone as we planned, I would now be submitting papers to serve a mission with my wife June.

Four years after we made that plan I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—something we never dreamed would happen. Realizing then that the Lord had different plans and different timing than we had assumed, I resigned as a justice of the supreme court. But this was not the end of the important differences. When I was 66, my wife June died of cancer. Two years later—a year and a half ago—I married Kristen McMain, the eternal companion who now stands at my side.

How fundamentally different my life is than I had sought to plan! My professional life has changed. My personal life has changed. But the commitment I made to the Lord—to put Him first in my life and to be ready for whatever He would have me do—has carried me through these changes of eternal importance.

Faith and trust in the Lord give us the strength to accept and persist, whatever happens in our lives. I did not know why I received a “no” answer to my prayers for the recovery of my wife of many years, but the Lord gave me a witness that this was His will, and He gave me the strength to accept it. Two years after her death, I met this wonderful woman who is now my wife for eternity. And I know that this also was the will of the Lord.

I return to the subject with which I began. Do not rely on planning every event of your life—even every important event. Stand ready to accept the Lord’s planning and the agency of others in matters that inevitably affect you. Plan, of course, but fix your planning on personal commitments that will carry you through no matter what happens. Anchor your life to eternal principles, and act upon those principles whatever the circumstances and whatever the actions of others. Then you can await the Lord’s timing and be sure of the outcome in eternity.

The most important principle of timing is to take the long view. Mortality is just a small slice of eternity, but how we conduct ourselves here—what we become by our actions and desires, confirmed by our covenants and the ordinances administered to us by proper authority—will shape our destiny for all eternity. As the prophet Amulek taught, “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32). That reality should help us take the long view—the timing of eternity. As President Charles W. Penrose declared at a general conference memorializing the death of President Joseph F. Smith:

“Why waste your time, your talents, your means, your influence in following something that will perish and

pass away, when you could devote yourselves to a thing that will stand forever? For this Church and kingdom, to which you belong, will abide and continue in time, in eternity, while endless ages roll along, and you with it will become mightier and more powerful; while the things of this world will pass away and perish, and will not abide in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord our God.” [CR, June 1919, 37]

I pray that each of us will hear and heed the word of the Lord on how to conduct ourselves in mortality and set our standards and make our commitments so that we can be in harmony and in tune with the timing of our Father in Heaven. I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, whose Church this is, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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