

Supplement to
Presidents of the Church

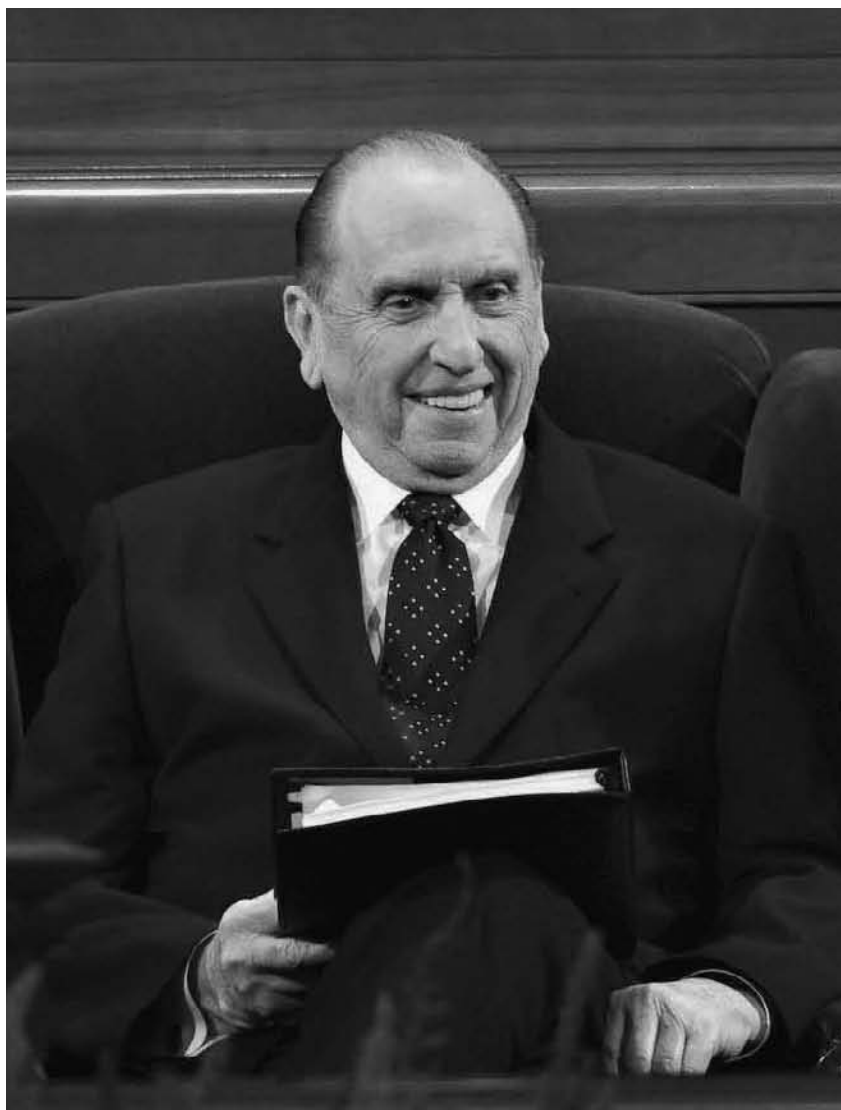
Teacher Manual

Religion 345

CHAPTER 16

Thomas S. Monson

SIXTEENTH PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH



PART 1: THE EARLY YEARS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Thomas Spencer Monson was born on August 21, 1927, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He lived on the same block as his grandparents and numerous aunts and uncles. Heber J. Grant was President of the Church. Later that year the seventh operating temple of the Church, the Mesa Arizona Temple, was dedicated and Church membership reached 644,745. In 1928 the 100th stake of the Church was organized and the final part of the Hill Cumorah in western New York was purchased. The Church celebrated the centennial of the organization of the Church on April 6, 1930, at general conference.

EVENTS, HIGHLIGHTS, AND TEACHINGS

Thomas S. Monson learned compassion for others from the examples of his parents and teachers.

Read Proverbs 22:6 with your students.

Ask: What does this verse suggest about the importance of parents and teachers on future generations?

Give each student a copy of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” (A copy is available in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet [2001], p. 44).

Ask: According to paragraph seven of the proclamation, what are some principles that should be taught to establish and maintain successful families? (List student responses on the board.)

Have a student read aloud the following memories President Thomas S. Monson shared about his father and his mother. Encourage students to identify some of the principles he learned from their examples.

“Seemingly little lessons of love are observed by children as they silently absorb the examples of their parents. My own father, a printer, worked long and hard practically every day of his life. I’m certain that on the Sabbath he would have enjoyed just being at home. Rather, he visited elderly family members and brought cheer into their lives.

“One was his uncle, who was crippled by arthritis so severe that he could not walk or care for himself. On a Sunday afternoon Dad would say to me, ‘Come along, Tommy; let’s take Uncle Elias for a short drive.’ Boarding the old 1928 Oldsmobile, we would proceed to Eighth West, where, at the home of Uncle Elias, I would wait in the car while Dad went inside. Soon he would emerge from the house, carrying in his arms like a china doll his crippled uncle. I then would open the door and watch how tenderly and with such affection my father would place Uncle Elias in the front seat so he would have a fine view while I occupied the rear seat.

“The drive was brief and the conversation limited, but oh, what a legacy of love! Father never read to me from the Bible about the good Samaritan. Rather, he took me with him and Uncle Elias in that old 1928 Oldsmobile along the road to Jericho” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 82; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 71).

“During the Great Depression, the homeless, the downtrodden, the unemployed ‘rode the rails’ that passed not far from our home. On numerous occasions, there would be a soft knock on the back door. When I opened the door, there I would see a man, sometimes two, ill-clothed, ill-fed, ill-schooled. . . . His hair would be tousled, his face unshaven. The question was always the same: ‘Could you spare some food?’ My dear mother invariably responded with a pleasant, ‘Come in and sit down at the table.’ She would then prepare a ham sandwich, cut a piece of cake, and pour a glass of milk. Mother would ask the visitor about his home, his family, his life. She provided hope and words of encouragement. Before leaving, the visitor would pause to express a gracious thank-you. I would note that a smile of content had replaced a look of despair. Eyes that were dull now shone with new purpose. Love, that noblest attribute of the human soul, can work wonders” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 82–83; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 68).

Ask students:

- What principles listed on the board did President Monson observe in his parents?
- Read Mosiah 4:16–20. What principle taught by King Benjamin was exemplified in President Monson’s mother’s actions?
- How do lessons learned by children influence them when they are adults?
- What valuable lessons have you learned from your parents, and how will those lessons help you in the future?

Have a student read aloud or summarize the section “He Developed Compassion in His Youth” in the student manual (pp. 3–4). You could also share the following experience President Monson related from his boyhood:

“Christmastime had come. We were preparing for the oven a gigantic turkey and anticipating the savory feast that awaited. A neighborhood pal of mine asked a startling question: ‘What does turkey taste like?’

“I responded, ‘Oh, about like chicken tastes.’

“Again a question: ‘What does chicken taste like?’

“It was then that I realized my friend had never eaten chicken or turkey. I asked what his family was going to have for Christmas dinner. There was no prompt response, just a downcast glance and the comment, ‘I dunno. There’s nothing in the house.’

“I pondered a solution. There was none. I had no turkeys, no chickens, no money. Then I remembered I did have two pet rabbits. Immediately I took them to my friend and handed the box to him with the comment, ‘Here, take these two rabbits. They’re good to eat—just like chicken.’

“He took the box, climbed the fence, and headed for home, a Christmas dinner safely assured. Tears came easily to me as I closed the door to the empty rabbit hutch. But I was not sad. A warmth, a feeling of indescribable joy, filled my heart” (“Christmas Gifts, Christmas Blessings,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, 4).

Ask students:

- Why do you think a young boy would give away his toys or his pets for someone else's benefit and happiness?
- What Christlike attributes was young Thomas S. Monson developing?
- What are some things that you valued but willingly gave up for the benefit of others or for the Lord?
- How do you feel when you share what you have with others?
- What principle taught by the Lord in Doctrine and Covenants 38:24 did young Thomas Monson exemplify?

Invite students to share their feelings about a favorite Primary or Sunday School teacher and to recall a lesson they learned from that teacher. President Monson shared how a favorite Sunday School teacher influenced him:

“Prospective teachers, hearing of the unsavory reputation of our particular [Sunday School] class, would graciously decline to serve or suggest the possibility of teaching a different class where the students were more manageable. We took delight in our newly found status and determined to live up to the fears of the faculty.

“One Sunday morning a lovely young lady accompanied the superintendent into the classroom and was presented to us as a teacher who requested the opportunity to teach us. We learned that she had been a missionary and loved young people. Her name was Lucy Gertsch. She was beautiful, soft-spoken, and interested in us. She asked each class member to introduce himself, and then she asked questions which gave her an understanding and insight into the background of each. . . .

“When Lucy taught, she made the scriptures actually live. We became personally acquainted with Samuel, David, Jacob, Nephi, Joseph Smith, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our gospel scholarship grew. Our deportment improved. Our love for Lucy Gertsch knew no bounds.

“We undertook a project to save nickels and dimes for what was to be a gigantic Christmas party. Sister Gertsch kept a careful record of our progress. As boys with typical appetites, we converted in our minds the monetary totals to cakes, cookies, pies, and ice cream. This was to be a glorious event. Never before had any of our teachers even suggested a social event like this was to be.

“The summer months faded into autumn. Autumn turned to winter. Our party goal had been achieved. The class had grown. A good spirit prevailed.

“None of us will forget that gray morning when our beloved teacher announced to us that the mother of one of our classmates had passed away. We thought of our own mothers and how much they meant to us. We felt sincere sorrow for Billy Devenport in his great loss.

“The lesson this Sunday was from the book of Acts, chapter 20, verse 35: ‘Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ At the conclusion of a well-prepared lesson, Lucy Gertsch commented on the economic situation of Billy’s family. These were Depression times, and money was scarce. With a twinkle in her eyes, she asked: ‘How would you like to follow this teaching of our Lord? How would you feel about taking our party fund and, as a class, giving it to the Devenports as an expression of our love?’ The decision was unanimous. We counted so carefully each penny and placed the total sum in a large envelope. A beautiful card was purchased and inscribed with our names.

“This simple act of kindness welded us together as one. We learned through our own experience that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.

“The years have flown. The old chapel is gone, a victim of industrialization. The boys and girls who learned, who laughed, who grew under the direction of that inspired teacher of truth have never forgotten her love or her lessons. Her personal influence for good was contagious” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 20–21; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2004, 21–22).

Ask students: Why do you think those lessons taught by Sister Gertsch were never forgotten?

Ask students to think of a time in their lives when they were positively affected by someone’s influence. Invite a few students to share their examples.

Invite students to share experiences that helped them learn the principle that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Ask them to think of someone they know now who is in need—spiritually, emotionally, socially, or financially—and to write down one way they could give some of their time, attention, or service to that individual. Encourage them to act on their plans.

He taught that the Lord helps those He calls to serve.

Write the following quotation on the board: “Whom the Lord _____, the Lord _____.”

Invite students to think about Church responsibilities and consider what might fit in the blanks. After a few responses, fill in the blanks so that it reads “Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.” Have students read the sections “Whom the Lord Calls, the Lord Qualifies” and “He Taught Service to Others” in the student manual (pp. 15–16). Ask them what President Monson said we can expect when we are on the Lord’s errand.

Have students examine the “Highlights in the Life of Thomas S. Monson” section in the student manual (p. 2) and note that he was called to Church leadership positions at young ages. Ask the following questions:

- How might this have helped him learn to receive the Lord’s help and have confidence in his ability to fulfill his callings?
- How have you experienced the Lord’s help while performing a Church calling?

He knew and taught the importance of prayer.

Read Alma 34:20–27 with your students and ask: What do these verses teach us about prayer?

As you share the following account from Thomas S. Monson’s early years, encourage students to think about the type of prayer he offered and how it affected the course of his life:

“My mind goes back to a day when I was approaching my eighteenth birthday. We were all very fearful. World War II was still being fought, and every young man knew that he had to make a choice. There was not much latitude to the choice: he could choose to go into the army or he could choose to go into the navy. I enlisted in the navy.

“As forty-four of us young men stood there in the recruiting office, I shall never forget the chief petty officers coming up to us and presenting a choice. They said, ‘Now, you young men must make an important choice. On one hand, you can be wise and choose to join the regular navy. You can enlist for four years. You will receive the finest schooling. You will be given every opportunity because the navy looks upon you as its own. If you choose not to follow this direction, you can go into the naval reserves. The navy does not have paramount interest in the naval reserves at this stage of the war. You will receive no schooling. You will be sent out to sea duty. No one knows what your future might be.’

“Then they asked us to sign on the dotted line. I turned to my father and said, ‘What should I do, Dad?’

“In a voice choked with emotion, he replied, ‘I don’t know anything about the navy.’

“That was the position of every father who was there that day.

“Forty-two of the forty-four enlisted in the regular navy for four years. The forty-third one could not pass the regular navy physical, so he had to enlist in the reserves. Then they came to me; and I confess that with all the faith I could muster I sent a prayer heavenward, earnestly hoping that the Lord would answer it. And he did. The thought came to me just as clearly as though I had heard a voice, ‘Ask those chief petty officers which they chose.’

“I asked each of those veteran petty officers: ‘Did you choose the regular navy, or did you choose the reserves?’

“Each of them had chosen the reserves.

“I turned and said, ‘With all the wisdom and experience that you have, I want to be on your side.’

“I chose the reserves, which meant that I enlisted for the duration of the war, plus six months. The war ended, and within a year I was honorably discharged from the service. I was able to continue my schooling. I had the privilege of serving in many Church capacities. Who knows how the course of my life might have been changed had I not taken that moment to call in faith upon my Heavenly Father for guidance and direction in what might appear to some to be a minor decision!”
(Pathways to Perfection: Discourses of Thomas S. Monson [1973], 63–65).

Discuss the following questions:

- How did the answer to President Monson’s prayer that day influence the rest of his life?
- Which verses from Alma 34:20–27 apply to his prayer?
- How can counseling with the Lord over what might seem to be minor decisions bring us great blessings?
- What did President Monson do to seek an answer to his prayer that is exemplified in Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9?

Read the section “He Gave Counsel on How to Pray” in the student manual (p. 18).

Ask: How can you use this counsel on prayer to improve your life?

He taught that we should never postpone a spiritual prompting.

Divide your class into three groups. Assign each group to read one of the following sections in the student manual: “As a Caring Bishop, He Searched Out the Less Active” (p. 10), “He Learned to Respond to the Promptings of the Spirit” (p. 10), and “They All Knew He Would Come, and He Always Did” (pp. 10–11). Have each group report to the class what they learned about following the promptings of the Spirit.

Read to the class part of Thomas S. Monson’s patriarchal blessing:

“You shall be indeed a leader among your fellows. . . . You shall have the privilege of going into the world to proclaim the message of the gospel . . . and you shall have the spirit of discernment” (quoted in Jeffrey R. Holland, “President Thomas S. Monson: Man of Action, Man of Faith, Always ‘on the Lord’s Errand,’” *Ensign*, Feb. 1986, 12).

Ask: What does it mean to have “the spirit of discernment”?

Explain to students that early in his priesthood ministry, Thomas S. Monson learned the critical nature of heeding spiritual promptings when they come. Share the following account of one of many instances when President Monson hearkened to the whisperings of the Spirit:

“Stan, a dear friend of mine, was taken seriously ill and rendered partially paralyzed. He had been robust in health, athletic in build, and active in many pursuits. Now he was unable to walk or to stand. His wheelchair was his home. The finest of physicians had cared for him, and the prayers of family and friends had been offered in a spirit of hope and trust. Yet Stan continued to lie in the confinement of his bed at the university hospital. He despaired.

“Late one afternoon I was swimming at the Deseret Gym, gazing at the ceiling while backstroking width after width. Silently, but ever so clearly, there came to my mind the thought: ‘Here you swim almost effortlessly, while your friend Stan languishes in his hospital bed, unable to move.’ I felt the prompting: ‘Get to the hospital and give him a blessing.’

“I ceased my swimming, dressed, and hurried to Stan’s room at the hospital. His bed was empty. A nurse said he was in his wheelchair at the swimming pool, preparing for therapy. I hurried to the area, and there was Stan, all alone, at the edge of the deeper portion of the pool. We greeted one another and returned to his room, where a priesthood blessing was provided.

“Slowly but surely, strength and movement returned to Stan’s legs. First he could stand on faltering feet. Then he learned once again to walk—step by step. Today one would not know that Stan had lain so close to death and with no hope of recovery.

“Frequently Stan speaks in Church meetings and tells of the goodness of the Lord to him. To some he reveals the dark thoughts of depression which engulfed him that afternoon as he sat in his wheelchair at the edge of the pool, sentenced, it seemed, to a life of despair. He tells how he pondered the alternative. It would be so easy to propel the hated wheelchair into the silent water of the deep pool. Life would then be over. But at that precise moment he saw me, his friend. That day Stan learned literally that we do not walk alone. I, too, learned a lesson that day: Never, never, never postpone following a prompting” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 87; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 69–70).

Invite students to share what impressed them about this account.

Write on the board: “*Never, never, never postpone following a prompting.*” Explain to your class that this is one of President Monson’s mottos for living. Share with students what Jeffrey R. Holland, then president of Brigham Young University, said of President Monson:

“You cannot understand President Thomas S. Monson . . . without understanding the repetition of such promptings in his life and the absolute loyalty with which he has kept [an] early promise to obey them. Indeed, his life seems something of a sacred manuscript upon which the Holy Ghost has written—and is still writing—one remarkable spiritual message after another” (“President Thomas S. Monson,” 11).

To further illustrate how President Monson has repeatedly followed the Spirit, show students the DVD *On the Lord’s Errand* (item 08043 090; 60 minutes). Invite them to watch for experiences that show how he strived to follow the Spirit.

Ask students:

- In what ways does understanding President Monson’s desire to follow the Spirit affect your faith and trust in his calling as President of the Church?
- In what ways can these experiences of President Monson help us nurture *our* ability to receive and act upon spiritual impressions?

Share your testimony that from his boyhood, Thomas S. Monson demonstrated a sensitivity to the needs of others and to the whisperings of the Spirit.

PART 2: THE LATER YEARS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By the end of 1963, the year Thomas S. Monson was called to be an Apostle, Church membership had increased to more than 2 million, with 389 stakes, 73 full-time missions, and 12 operating temples (see Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 101–2). By 2008, when he became Church President, Church membership was approximately 13.2 million, with 2,790 stakes, 348 missions, and 124 operating temples (see Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 24–25).

Thomas S. Monson became the 16th President of the Church at a time when wars, political instability, economic stresses, and natural disasters greatly accelerated the efforts of the humanitarian services of the Church. Temple building continued to expand, and President Thomas S. Monson dedicated the 129th operating temple in Draper, Utah, in March 2009.

EVENTS, HIGHLIGHTS, AND TEACHINGS

Thomas S. Monson was called to be an Apostle.

Invite students to turn to the “Highlights in the Life of Thomas S. Monson” section of the student manual (p. 2). Have them identify his Church callings that are listed prior to his being called as an Apostle.

Ask: In what ways do you think his service as a bishop, a counselor in a stake presidency, and a mission president helped prepare him to be an Apostle?

Read with your students the section “He Was Called to Be an Apostle” in the student manual (p. 12). Then ask:

- How old was Thomas S. Monson when he was called to be an Apostle? (*Note:* At the age of 36, he was the youngest man called to be an Apostle since 1910).
- What can we learn from his example about how to receive a new calling?
- According to his comments, what prompted him to speak about humility?

He labored in the German Democratic Republic.

Read the following account from a missionary who served in East Germany, officially the German Democratic Republic, in 1958:

“At that time, in our country, there was so much pressure on the people from the Communists and the Marxists that many people just didn’t dare join a church, even if they had an inner desire to do so. They didn’t dare because they were afraid of the reprisals at work or wherever it was found out. . . .

“The authorities in the [German Democratic Republic] knew our methods, how we went from door to door and from street to street. In Werdau, for example, we went through every street. We would hand out the Book of Mormon, and the authorities would come behind us and tell the people, ‘Give us that Book of Mormon’ or ‘Give us that literature that the people from that church have just given you.’ We handed them out, and they collected them” (Erich Ortlieb and Marianne Zwirner Ortlieb, “The Border Guards Often Confiscated Them,” in Garold N. Davis and Norma S. Davis, comp. and trans., *Behind the Iron Curtain: Recollections of Latter-day Saints in East Germany, 1945–1989* [1996], 182–84).

Ask students: How do you think these religious restrictions affected the Church in the German Democratic Republic?

In 1968, Elder Thomas S. Monson was assigned to travel to East Germany to visit with members of the Church who were unable to leave the country and enjoy the blessings of the temple. Invite students to turn to the section “He Served the Church in the German Democratic Republic” in the student manual (p. 13) and read the first four paragraphs.

Ask: Given the religious restrictions placed upon the East German Saints, what was remarkable about the promise Elder Monson made?

From the student manual (pp. 14–15), read with your students the remainder of Elder Monson’s experience in the German Democratic Republic. Then ask:

- How many years passed between the time of Elder Monson’s promise and the dedication of the Freiberg Germany Temple? (17)
- How many years passed between the dedication of the temple and the time when missionaries were allowed to enter and to leave the German Democratic Republic? (4)
- In what ways did priesthood leaders and other Church members demonstrate their faith in Elder Monson’s prophetic promise and help it be fulfilled during those years?

Read Articles of Faith 1:12 with your class, and ask how the beliefs stated in this article of faith helped lead to these miraculous events.

He was a gifted administrator.

In 1985, after serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for 22 years, Thomas S. Monson served for more than 8 years as second counselor to President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994). President Monson then served for 9 months as a counselor to President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995) and for nearly 13 years as first counselor to President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), for a total of 22 years as a counselor in the First Presidency.

Concerning President Monson’s work habits, Lynne Cannegieter, his personal secretary, said:

“The demands upon his life would be absolutely incomprehensible to the average member of the Church, . . . but he does it all with a smile. He has an amazing capacity for hard work, with an equally amazing capacity to manage many complex and detailed matters simultaneously. And he is thorough. He never leaves any task unfinished” (in Jeffrey R. Holland, “President Thomas S. Monson: Finishing the Course, Keeping the Faith,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, 13).

Read the section “He Was Called as a Counselor in the First Presidency” in the student manual (p. 15).

Ask students: What leadership skills did two fellow Apostles identify in President Monson?

“Have I done any good in the world today?”

President Thomas S. Monson worked tirelessly for the Lord. Have a student read aloud the section “What Are We Doing with Today?” in the student manual (p. 18). Invite the class to listen for President Monson’s formula for happiness.

Ask the following questions:

- What was President Monson’s formula for happiness?
- In what ways does his formula result in happiness?
- What can we do to increase our awareness for doing good?

If time permits, share one or more of the following accounts of President Thomas S. Monson’s personal ministry found in the student manual: “As a Caring Bishop, He Searched Out the Less Active” (p. 10), “His Ministry Was Characterized by Following the Promptings of the Spirit in Serving the One” (p. 12), and “He Always Cared for the Sick and Afflicted” (pp. 12–13).

He cared for the widows and the elderly.

Read with your students the section “They All Knew He Would Come, and He Always Did” in the student manual (pp. 10–11). Then read James 1:27 and Matthew 25:31–40 with your students.

Ask students:

- In what ways was President Monson’s life an example of James 1:27?
- What were the criteria for separating the sheep from the goats?
- When you consider your own life, are your actions in alignment with the description for the sheep?

Ask students to write on a piece of paper one thing they could do to improve their lives and be more likely counted as sheep. Ask them to carry the paper with them as a reminder.

Conclude this section by reading what Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said about President Thomas S. Monson:

“I have known President Monson for a long time. He is a mighty man of Israel who was foreordained to preside over this Church. He is well known for his captivating stories and parables, but we who know him best understand that his life is a practical and exemplary model of the application of those stories. While it is a compliment to him that many of the great and mighty of this world know and honor him, perhaps it is an even greater tribute that many of the lowly call him friend.

“To his core, President Monson is kind and compassionate. His words and deeds exemplify his concern for the one” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 15–16; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2008, 17).

He taught the Aaronic Priesthood holders.

President Thomas S. Monson frequently used the priesthood session of general conference to teach Aaronic Priesthood holders. Divide your class into five groups and give each group one of the following statements from President Monson. Assign each group to discuss and report to the class on their answers to each of the following questions:

- Which phrases or sentences in the statement best convey President Monson’s central message?

- Why would this counsel be valuable to Aaronic Priesthood holders?
- What experiences have you had that have reinforced the truthfulness of the statement?

1. “President Harold B. Lee, one of the great teachers in the Church, gave us this easy-to-understand counsel regarding the priesthood. Said he: ‘You see, when one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord’s errand.’

“Now, some of you may be shy by nature, perhaps feeling yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord’s work, and when we are on the Lord’s errand, brethren, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Remember that the Lord will shape the back to bear the burden placed upon it” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 61; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2005, 56).

2. “As presidencies of Aaronic Priesthood quorums, . . . we can, with the Lord’s help, reach out and rescue those for whom we have responsibility. Young men, with a smile on your face and determination in your heart, you can take, arm in arm, a less-active boy and together come to priesthood meeting and learn of the Lord and what He has prepared for you to do. You are entitled to His divine help, for He has promised you: ‘I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up’ [D&C 84:88]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 62; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 58).

3. “Youth is a time for growth. Our minds during these formative years are receptive to truth, but they are also receptive to error. The responsibility to choose rests with each deacon, teacher, and priest. As the years go by, the choices become increasingly complex, and at times we may be tempted to waver. The need for a personal code of honor is demanded not only on a daily basis but frequently many times in a given day.

“The counsel found in one of the hymns sung frequently in our meetings provides an inspired guide:

‘Choose the right when a choice is placed before you.
In the right the Holy Spirit guides;
And its light is forever shining o’er you,
When in the right your heart confides’ [“Choose the Right,” *Hymns*, no. 239].

“A spirit of determination to do the right thing can come in earliest boyhood” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 64–65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 48).

4. “Tonight, as I look at you young men and realize who you are and what you may become, I declare, ‘You have great expectations’—not as the result of an unknown benefactor but as the result of a known benefactor, even our Heavenly Father, and great things are expected of you.

“Life’s journey is not traveled on a freeway devoid of obstacles, pitfalls, and snares. Rather, it is a pathway marked by forks and turnings. Decisions are constantly before us. To make them wisely, courage is needed—the courage to say *no*, the courage to say *yes*. Decisions do determine destiny” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 57–58; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2004, 54–55).

5. “I hope with all my heart and soul that every young man who receives the priesthood will honor that priesthood and be true to the trust which is conveyed when it is conferred. May each of us who holds the priesthood of God know what he believes. As the Apostle Peter admonished, may we ever be ready ‘to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you’ [1 Peter 3:15]. There will be occasions in each of our lives when we will be called upon to explain or to defend our beliefs. When the time for performance arrives, the time for preparation is past.

“Most of you young men will have the opportunity to share your testimonies when you serve as missionaries throughout the world. Prepare now for that wonderful privilege” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 56; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2006, 54).

He taught about reactivation.

Tell students that a recurring message in President Thomas S. Monson’s sermons is reaching out to the less active and bringing them back to activity in the Church. Have a student read aloud the following statement by President Monson. Ask the class to listen for the reasons he gave for why individuals come back into Church activity.

“Two fundamental reasons largely account for these changes of attitudes, of habits, of actions.

“First, men have been shown their eternal possibilities and have made the decision to achieve them. They cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once excellence is within their reach.

“Second, other men and women and, yes, young people have followed the admonition of the Savior and have loved their neighbors as themselves and helped to bring their neighbors’ dreams to fulfillment and their ambitions to realization.

“The catalyst in this process has been the principle of love” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 62; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 58).

Ask students:

- What did President Monson identify as reasons individuals come back to full activity in the Church? (Write the answers on the board to refer to later.)
- What are ways to help others recognize their eternal possibilities?
- How have you seen love bring someone back into Church activity?
- According to Matthew 22:36–40 and Mosiah 2:17, how has President Monson lived the greatest commandment in the law?

Read the following illustration on reactivation from President Monson:

“Now for the illustration pertaining to those men whose habits and lives include but little Church attendance or Church activity of any kind. . . .

“. . . These men await a helping hand, an encouraging word, and a personal testimony of truth expressed from a heart filled with love and a desire to lift and to build.

“Shelley, my friend, was such a person. His wife and children were fine members, but all efforts to motivate him toward baptism and then priesthood blessings had failed miserably.

“But then Shelley’s mother died. Shelley was so sorrowful that he retired to a special room at the mortuary where the funeral was being held. We had wired the proceedings to this room so that he might mourn alone and where no one could see him weep with sorrow. As I comforted him in that room before going to the pulpit, he gave me a hug, and I knew a tender chord had been touched.

“Time passed. Shelley and his family moved to another part of the city. I was called to preside over the Canadian Mission and, together with my family, moved to Toronto, Canada, for a three-year period.

“When I returned and after I was called to the Twelve, Shelley telephoned me. He said, ‘Bishop, will you seal my wife, my family, and me in the Salt Lake Temple?’

“I answered hesitantly, ‘But Shelley, you must first be baptized a member of the Church.’

“He laughed and responded, ‘Oh, I took care of that while you were in Canada. I sort of snuck up on you. There was this home teacher who called on us regularly and taught me the truths of the Church. He was a school crossing guard and helped the small children across the street each morning when they went to school and each afternoon when they went home. He asked me to help him. During the intervals when there was no child crossing, he gave me additional instruction pertaining to the Church’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 61; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 57–58).

Ask students:

- What events were instrumental in bringing Shelley back into Church activity?
- In what ways did the two reasons written on the board happen in Shelley’s life?
- How does the principle that Alma taught to his son Helaman in Alma 37:6–7 apply in the life of Thomas S. Monson?

Give each student a piece of paper. Allow a few minutes for them to write down how they could follow President Monson’s counsel to help someone they know return to activity in the Church.

He is a special witness of Jesus Christ.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 107:23 with your class. Then ask: What does it mean that Apostles are “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world”?

Share the following witnesses of the Savior declared by President Thomas S. Monson. Ask students to listen for how his testimony can help us come to know the Savior better.

1. “There is one, above all others, whose personal influence covers the continents, spans the oceans, and penetrates the hearts of true believers. He atoned for the sins of mankind.

“I testify that He is a teacher of truth—but He is more than a teacher. He is the Exemplar of the perfect life—but He is more than an exemplar. He is the Great Physician—but He is more than a physician. He is the literal Savior of the world, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One of Israel, even the risen Lord, who declared:

“‘I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and the life of the world’ [3 Nephi 11:10–11].

“‘I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father’ [D&C 110:4].

“As His witness, I testify to you that He lives!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 22; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2004, 23).

2. “May we ever be guided by the supreme Exemplar, even the son of Mary, the Savior Jesus Christ—whose very life provided a perfect model for us to follow.

“Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as a mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick; He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

“What was the reaction to His message of mercy, His words of wisdom, His lessons of life? There were a precious few who appreciated Him. They bathed His feet. They learned His word. They followed His example.

“Then there were those who denied Him. When asked by Pilate, ‘What shall I do . . . with Jesus which is called Christ?’ [Matthew 27:22] they cried, ‘Crucify him’ [Mark 15:13]. They mocked Him. They gave Him vinegar to drink. They reviled Him. They smote Him with a reed. They did spit upon Him. They crucified Him.

“Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter and Andrew by the shores of the beautiful Sea of Galilee, He said, ‘Follow me’ [Matthew 4:19]. To Philip of old came the call, ‘Follow me’ [John 1:43]. To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, ‘Follow me’ [Luke 5:27]. And to you and to me, if we but listen, will come that same beckoning invitation, ‘Follow me’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 70–71; or *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 62, 67).

Ask students:

- What impresses you most about President Monson’s witness of Christ?
- How is President Monson’s life a witness of one who follows Jesus Christ?
- When have you felt most that Thomas S. Monson is a prophet?

Conclude by sharing your testimony of the prophetic call of President Thomas S. Monson and inviting others to share their testimonies.