Teaching in Zion

Karen Spencer

Doctrine and Covenants section 42 is most known today for its discussion of the law of consecration. Early Latter-day Saints made a similar association and knew it as “The Laws of the Church of Christ.” The revelation that became this section came as faithful and eager Saints had questions about their life as members of the growing church.¹ The first of their questions was simply where to live: “Shall the Church come together into one place or remain as they are in Separate bodies?” The answer, in verses 1–10, was to build up the church in every region for the time being. The second question was how to live, or, what would be the laws for the church. Above verse 11 in manuscript copies are the words “the Law regulating the Church in her present situation till the time of her gathering” or simply “the Law.”² Verses 11–69 became the accepted set of regulations that were to govern their existence as the Lord’s Saints. These verses contain the instructions that today are most readily associated with the law of consecration: they instruct Saints on how to live communally, share their excess with the poor, and begin to build a New Jerusalem to prepare for the second coming of the Savior.

Today’s Latter-day Saints sometimes feel that the section applies only loosely to them in the current church since they do not live in communal cities. For whatever reason, it seems easy to forget that Doctrine and Covenants 42 addresses more than properties and storehouses; it also discusses clothing, beauty, mourning, teaching, love, forgiveness, faith, and more. Section 42 includes all these things as important elements of a Zion community. Or put another way, understanding how to dedicate all of life to God, even clothing or mourning, prepares Latter-day Church members to become a Zion people.

This paper will focus specifically on just one of these elements: teaching. Part of my reason is that Doctrine and Covenants 42 itself gives it priority placement within the Law. Remember that the words the law appear just after verse 10 in many manuscripts; the first topic discussed afterwards is teaching. After a quick note in verse 11, which establishes that those preaching afar should have clear authority to do so, verses 12–14 lay out the directions concerning teaching for the Saints. These verses discuss what, how, and when (even when not) to teach. Each of these three verses is in conversation with other scriptures that help expand and explain their meaning more deeply. I will bring out those connections below. My primary aim is to show that teaching is not merely the task of relaying information in better and more effective ways. It is a profound responsibility of stewardship similar to other acts of consecration discussed throughout the Doctrine and Covenants. In this way, teaching can be an essential part of building Zion.

What to teach

Verse 12: And again, the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel.

The first point section 42 makes about teaching is what to teach. Doctrine and Covenants 42 commands that three things be considered:

(1) the principles of the gospel, (2) the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and (3) the fulness of the gospel. The text also acknowledges a certain relationship between these three things: the principles of the gospel are specifically in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, as is the fulness of the gospel also in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. These two books together are a pivot point, with the principles on one hand and the fulness of the gospel on the other. The scriptures are an anchor on which teaching relies.
The scriptures themselves often model their own usability. Many places in scripture quote or allude to past scripture. Fortunately, or perhaps strategically, the very verse following verse 12 contains an allusion to a previous, significant passage; in this case, it points to an entire section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Verse 13 begins, “And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them.” The “covenants and church articles” was, at the time, a common way to refer to what is now known as Doctrine and Covenants section 20. And in fact this section itself models teaching through the scriptures. There are references to and direct quotations from the Book of Mormon throughout this section.

The first part of section 20 contains a short history of the “rise of the church,” which includes the translation of the Book of Mormon. Following this brief history is a list of doctrines confirmed by the events of the rise of the church, such as God created the earth and humans in his likeness; God gave humans commandments; transgressing these laws caused the fall; God gave his Only Begotten Son; and salvation comes to those who believe, are baptized, and endure in faith to the end. These gospel principles are all found in the Book of Mormon.\(^3\) Here the language of section 20 does not always quote the Book of Mormon directly, but it is clearly allowing the Book of Mormon language to influence it. For example, verses 26–27 allude to several Book of Mormon passages with this same theme: “Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets . . . as well as those who should come after.”\(^4\) Allusions to the Book of Mormon only become stronger as the section continues. The next part of Doctrine and Covenants 20 lays out some specifics of the new church’s organization, especially the responsibilities of priesthood leaders. At least nine times phrases and words from the Book of Mormon are used, including the very language of priesthood ordinances. The most well known and most closely quoted of these are the sacrament prayers for the bread and the water, drawn from Moroni 4:1–3 and 5:1–2 respectively. Borrowings from the Book of Mormon also include D&C 20:37 (from Moroni 6:2–3), D&C 20:45 (from Moroni 6:9), D&C 20:60 (from Moroni 3:4), D&C 20:71 (from Moroni 8:10), D&C 20:73 (from 3 Nephi 11:23–25), D&C 20:75 (from Moroni 6:6), and D&C 20:83 (from Moroni 6:7). D&C 20 is clearly intent on using the scriptures as an anchor of the new church.

One of the connections just mentioned will be particularly important later in this paper, so I will highlight it in table 1.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1. Comparison of D&amp;C 20:45 and Moroni 6:9</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D&amp;C 20:45</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God.</td>
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Once the similarities of these verses are noted, it seems likely that D&C 20:45 is using the language of Moroni 6:9 purposefully. The main difference between the two verses is that Moroni gives more details about what the meeting might include.

Notably, not too long before Joseph Smith received Doctrine and Covenants 20, Oliver Cowdery produced a document titled the “Articles of the Church of Christ.” In addition to the similarity in the names, the content of this document is so like section 20 that many scholars feel this document provided a model for D&C 20.\(^5\) What I find most significant is that they both use a similar method: Oliver also used scripture to teach doctrines and ordinances of the restored gospel. Oliver’s reasons for doing so came by revelation, but a revelation that came long before D&C 42. In 1829, the Lord said to Oliver, “Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon the things
which are written; For in them are all things written concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my rock” (D&C 18:3–4). God was beginning to teach there the same principle that D&C 42:12 teaches: the scriptures are reliable and useful resources for building up the latterday church. We have seen so far that the first thing mentioned in the Law is teaching. We have also seen that the first thing it says about teaching is that it should focus on the principles of the gospel, as found in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Nestled in the following verse is a reference to section 20, a section that demonstrates the potential of using the Book of Mormon when teaching about gospel principles or the foundation of the church. Verse 12 also asserts that not only the principles but even the fulness of the gospel are found there. Like D&C 18:3–4, D&C 42:12 loudly proclaims that the scriptures are comprehensive enough to rely on as we build up and teach in Zion.

How to teach

Verse 13: 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.

The second point Doctrine and Covenants 42 makes about teaching is how it ought to be done. First, verse 13 tells Saints to “observe the covenants and church articles” (found in D&C 20), and second, to teach “as they shall be directed by the Spirit.” That is, those teaching should teach according to previous commandments and according to the Spirit. Verse 12 taught that the scriptures were strong enough to rely on, but using the scriptures to teach in Zion requires a little more training. Once again, exploring the reference to D&C 20 will expand our understanding and provide some clarification.

Remember that section 20 discusses several offices of the priesthood and what duties are assigned to each office. Here in table 2 each office specifically mentioned—elder, priest, and teacher—is assigned the duty of teaching.

<table>
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<th>Table 2. Duties of elders, priests, and teachers</th>
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<tr>
<td>D&amp;C 20:42 elders</td>
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<td>D&amp;C 20:46 priests</td>
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<tr>
<td>D&amp;C 20:59 teachers</td>
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Thus one way of “observing” the covenants and church articles was to remember that it was a priesthood duty to teach. Failing to teach, as also failing to do any of their other duties, would mean the members of the priesthood were slackening in their efforts to build Zion.

Beyond that, however, I think there is more to be learned from the covenants and church articles about how to teach. The reference to the Spirit in D&C 42:13 may in fact refer to D&C 20:45 (see table 3). While many places in scripture exhort Saints to listen to the Spirit, the fact that D&C 42:13 refers directly to the covenants and church articles makes this allusion seem particularly likely.

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<th>Table 3. Comparison of D&amp;C 42:13 and 20:45</th>
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<td>D&amp;C 42:13</td>
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The language of D&C 42:13 might be a stern reminder that as elders, priests, and teachers are observing their roles, they must never forget that all this is under the direction of the Spirit. The same sentiment was also expressed in D&C 20:45, only reversed: as the elders conduct meetings by the Holy Ghost, they should remember that they are doing this according to the commandments and revelations of God.
As already noted above, Doctrine and Covenants 20:45 quotes from Moroni 6:9 (see table 1). The main difference between these two verses is that Moroni 6:9 provides greater detail than D&C 20:45. Apparently, D&C 20:45 simply abridged Moroni 6:9 for convenience, and now D&C 42:13 is paraphrasing D&C 20:45 for convenience again. However, I think a little more is going on. For instance, it turns out that most of the details Moroni included in his writings (that were dropped in D&C 20:45), actually appear in nearby verses in D&C 20 (see table 4).

**Table 4. Comparison of Moroni 6:9 and D&C 20:42, 46, 59**

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<th>Moroni 6:9</th>
<th>D&amp;C 20:42, 46, 59</th>
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<td>for as the power of the Holy Ghost led him whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done</td>
<td>teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church, preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ</td>
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The details Moroni gives are specific examples of what the Holy Ghost might direct them to do (preaching, exhorting, praying, supplicating, and singing), and as just noted, these or similar words are found throughout the descriptions of the duties of the elders, priests, teachers, and deacons.

Coming full circle, Moroni 6:9 helps us see that when D&C 42:13 reminds elders, priests, and teachers that they should "observe" the covenants and church articles, they are being reminded of two things at the same time: they are being reminded of their responsibility to teach and also of their responsibility to conduct the entire meeting by the Spirit. That is, they should keep in mind that teaching might or might not be what the Holy Ghost is leading them to do. This responsibility means that they will at times be directed to teach and at other times to exhort, sing, and so on. Therefore, read in this light, the word as in the phrase "as they are directed by the Spirit" means "if" they are directed to teach, or "inasmuch as" they are directed to teach.

To review, verse 12 opened this passage by directing that what should be taught are the principles of the gospel, with an eye to the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Verse 13 followed this up by using Doctrine and Covenants 20 to explain how teaching is related both to the priesthood and to other things that happen when the Saints gather together. Most importantly, verse 13 emphasizes that in all these commandments, the leader is the Spirit.

**When to teach**

Verse 14: And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.

The last point Doctrine and Covenants 42 makes about teaching is when to teach. There are three important details here. The first is that the Spirit comes when you ask for it "by the prayer of faith." The second detail is only implied but is a bit surprising: even if you ask, the Spirit might not come. And the third detail can certainly be rather uncomfortable: if it does not come, "ye shall not teach."

Both in the early days of the Latter day Saint Church as well as today, this verse is one of the most commonly quoted verses in talks and books about teaching. Hundreds of LDS talks use this verse to encourage teachers to pray for the Spirit so that their teaching might be as effective as possible. There are often discussions as well on how ineffective it is to teach without the Spirit. In fact it is used so often that Elder Dallin H. Oaks said that the words of this verse, along with D&C 50:13–14 and 21–22, are "so familiar they are almost slogans." He went on to warn: "We are in danger of using them without understanding them."

I think what might be missing in Latter day Saint discussions of this verse is some explanation of the last, uncomfortable detail: without the Spirit "ye shall not teach." The image of a teacher abandoning the lesson and
sitting in silence is so awkward that discussions usually simply do not address this part of the verse at all. (One exception is the interpretation that a teacher without the spirit is talking but not really teaching anything.) Certainly the most important detail is clear in these talks: the Spirit is crucial to teaching. And understandably, that has been, and will continue to be, the focus of talks meant to inspire teachers. For the purposes of this paper, however, I would like to expand on the question of how this last detail might be interpreted in a way that is productive to teachers.

Verse 14, like verse 13, is concerned with when the Spirit will or will not lead one to teach, but verse 14 uses slightly different language: that of "receiving" the Spirit. At the time section 42 was given, there was a question among religious Americans about what it meant to "receive" spirits in general. And as Mark Staker has made clear, Kirtland was not immune from these questions. Converts, neighbors, and visitors brought to Kirtland ideas from various traditions. Among these traditions was a group called the "Shouting Methodists," who, like others, took spiritual manifestations as a central aspect of worship. The name they gave to their experiences with the Holy Ghost was getting "the power." Staker explains, "Shouting Methodists and other religious enthusiasts expected that 'the power,' meaning the power of God or the Holy Spirit, would come as they prayed, causing them to fall to the ground, binding their tongues, making it impossible to speak, and sometimes accompanying these manifestations with jerks and trembling."

It is worth pointing out here how closely this resembles Joseph Smith's story about his own religious experiences. Joseph says in his history that he grew up in a time of "great excitement" where ministers were "getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it" (JS—H 1:8, 6). Staker brilliantly compares what happened to Joseph Smith just before the first vision with what others were calling "the power": "No sooner did he kneel and begin to offer up the desires of his heart to God, than he was 'seized upon by some power.' It was 'the power of some actual being from the unseen world who had such a marvelous power as I had never before felt.' His consistent description of the force as a 'power' used a word and described effects familiar to Shouting Methodists since it 'entirely overcame' him in such a way that it could 'bind' his tongue."

Many in Kirtland were seeking after this very experience during the time when Doctrine and Covenants 42 was received. There were also many in Kirtland who were uneasy about this sort of religious expression. Several of the elders asked Joseph Smith to inquire of God what was right and wrong. One might expect that Joseph would not have needed to ask God, since he had gained wisdom from his own experiences. However, when the elders asked him to give inspired clarification, he decided to again "ask of God" (JS—H 1:13) and received, as part of this clarification, what is now sections 46 and 50. Each of these sections deals with receiving the Spirit and the danger of receiving what seems to be divine manifestations but what is actually the work of false spirits. These sections served to greatly clarify the Saints' understanding and will assist us in comprehending D&C 42:14.

Doctrine and Covenants 46 repeats a commandment from section 20: "The elders . . . [shall] conduct all meetings as they are directed and guided by the Holy Spirit" (v. 2). (It's almost as if it is set out to prove that this is a continuation of the trajectory running through Moroni 6, D&C 20, and D&C 42.) Verse 7 repeats this idea, but pushes beyond to the question at hand: "That which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils."
This verse acknowledges the possibility that some in Kirtland have been, or could be, confused about their spiritual experiences. In order to avoid this confusion, Doctrine and Covenants 46:7 exhorts members to do “all things with prayer” and to do this in “holiness of heart.” The following verses add to this, suggesting that another way to avoid confusion is to remember that spiritual gifts are not a mark of superior spirituality. For example, while the elders have the assignment to conduct meetings by the Spirit, the members are also commanded to seek the Spirit (v. 7) and also to “seek… earnestly the best gifts” (v. 8). In addition, both leaders and general members should not seek for “a sign that [individuals] may consume it upon their lusts,” but rather for spiritual gifts from which “all may be benefited” and “all may be profited” (vv. 9, 12). These verses confirm the liberality of the Spirit’s gifts, given to “every man,” but they also warn that these gifts are not given for selfish purposes. Perhaps one of the major misunderstandings in Kirtland was that Saints were seeking spiritual manifestations such as “the power” to show off their superior spirituality.

In addition, Doctrine and Covenants 46 emphasizes that these gifts are “given unto the church” (v. 10). That is, these gifts are given to individual members of the church, so that other members of the church may be blessed. This is akin to the way Paul talks about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians: “Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (1 Corinthians 14:12). Not only are these gifts not meant to be proof of spiritual uniqueness or superiority, they also are not meant to be used just for the individual.

In fact, many of these gifts are only able to be used if they are received when other people are present. For example, “To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, . . . [and] to others it is given to believe on their words” (D&C 46:13–14). Another example: “To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge” (v. 18). Note that even the gifts of healing and being healed (verses 19 and 20) require at least two people: one who needs to be healed, and one who can do the healing.\(^\text{11}\) This is also like Paul’s direction to not speak in tongues unless another is able and present to interpret (1 Corinthians 14:27–28). We have seen three points about gifts so far in Doctrine and Covenants 46: they can be sought by all members, they should not be used for prideful reasons, and they are often received in a group setting. Reading section 46 this way, one could see this discussion of spiritual gifts as similar to the discussion about conducting meetings in Moroni 6:9 or D&C 20. Just as the Spirit guides the person conducting a meeting, the Spirit also oversees the distribution of spiritual gifts. And these two things come together, since the members in a meeting of a congregation and the member conducting that meeting are all being guided by the same Spirit. Remembering that all are potential participants and all are to be benefited helps members avoid pride and therefore avoid seduction by evil spirits.

All of this is helpful, but it does not quite address the original question: how can the Saints tell if a spiritual gift they are receiving is from God? Or, further, what if there are those “among you professing and yet be not of God” (D&C 46:27)? The response in section 46 is that a “head” is required to oversee spiritual manifestations, language again similar to that of Paul.\(^\text{12}\) Even though the previous verses just suggested an equality about spiritual gifts (they are given to every man, severally) Doctrine and Covenants 46:27–29 explains that “the bishop of the church, and . . . elders unto the church, are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts . . . [and] unto some it may be given to have all those gifts, that there may be a head.” Once it is understood that all can receive spiritual gifts, we return to the idea that someone is at the head to “conduct” those gifts and see where the Spirit is leading them as a group. At this point, the section folds back on itself to the words in verse 2 that “it always has been given to the elders of my church . . . to conduct all meetings as they are directed and guided by the Holy Spirit.”
However, those assigned to leadership positions in Kirtland were apparently still left confused about just how to perform this responsibility. Doctrine and Covenants 46 did not condemn any specific spiritual manifestation, something that would have made it easier for leaders to identify those who were “not of God.” As Staker explains, since the revelation left decisions up to the membership, most Saints simply continued on as they had before.\(^\text{13}\) Only when further clarification came, in what is now D&C 50, did their understanding begin to change.\(^\text{14}\)

Among other things, section 50 confirms that some of the Saints in Kirtland were receiving evil spirits. Verses 13–15 and 17–18 include this stern rebuke:

\[
\text{Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained? To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth. And then received ye spirits which ye could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this are ye justified? . . . Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God. (D&C 50:13–18)}
\]

The problem in Kirtland was that the elders thought they were teaching and conducting with the Spirit, but had instead mistaken other spirits for the Holy Spirit. Section 50 warns that “there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth” (v. 2). Even though they were teaching “the word of truth” (perhaps even following D&C 42:12 by teaching the principles of the gospel from the scriptures), they were receiving and teaching by spirits that they “could not understand” and that were “not of God” (see also D&C 46:27). And as in D&C 46, section 50 also gives all members the responsibility to distinguish spirits: “And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth . . . ? If it be some other way it is not of God” (D&C 50:19–20). Section 50 broadens this responsibility to all members, teachers and hearers alike.

However, after this equal responsibility is affirmed, D&C 50 returns to the idea that someone needs to be at the “head.” This time the person is given the authority not only to discern spirits but to command them:

\[
\text{But know this, it shall be given you what you shall ask; and as ye are appointed to the head, the spirits shall be subject unto you. Wherefore, it shall come to pass, that if you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand, and you receive not that spirit, ye shall ask of the Father in the name of Jesus; and if he give not unto you that spirit, then you may know that it is not of God. (D&C 50:30–31)}
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And now, finally, we come back to the language of Doctrine and Covenants 42:14. To help illuminate the connection with these passages, see table 5.

**Table 5. Comparison of D&C 50:31 and 42:14**

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<td>And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.</td>
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While not identical in nature, the principle in both seems the same. In both cases, the person (the head of a congregation or classroom) is instructed to proceed according to the Spirit. In both cases, if there seems to be a spirit present, then the person should pray for the Spirit, by the prayer of faith. If the spirit (or Spirit) is withheld, then the person can know that that feeling or spirit was not of God.
If this is a fair interpretation, then it would seem that a person who is called upon or who desires to teach should seek out the Spirit by the "prayer of faith." If the Spirit comes, then the person can proceed to teach. If it does not come, then the teacher is directed “not [to] teach” because it is not what God wants in that instance. Teaching at that moment would be without the aid of the Spirit and therefore by “some other way.” Not only would that be “less effective,” as is commonly identified, it would also be “not of God.” The strictness of the command that “ye shall not teach” may imply that some teachers will be tempted to continue to teach without the Spirit and claim that their words are God's words.\(^\text{15}\)

This may still seem a bit abstract or, at worse, to leave teachers terrified of teaching when they should not feel that trepidation. (I can see why most talks do not address this verse directly.) However, when Doctrine and Covenants 42:12–14 are taken as a whole, the instruction is actually much more robust. Remember that the above discussion of verse 13 showed that the Spirit may push toward exhortation, supplication, singing, teaching, and so forth. A person authorized as a teacher for a given classroom may feel guided to do any of these things, as before mentioned. Verse 14 comes at this same principle from a different angle. A teacher who studied the scriptures and came prepared to teach may, in the moment of teaching, feel the Spirit leave or lessen. In that moment, as the Spirit withdraws a pace, the teacher has the choice of not teaching according to the plan. The opportunity is then opened for the teacher to listen for where the Spirit is directing and go that way instead. A teacher who has been praying for the Spirit in faith, and who has been authorized to be at the head of a classroom, has the right and responsibility to pay attention to when the Spirit is there and when it withdraws. By this care, a teacher can fulfill her or his role outlined in D&C 42:12–14.

**Stewardship**

The Doctrine and Covenants envisions church members as stewards over their properties. That is, they are not in actuality the owners of their belongings but those that oversee and take care of them. God is the owner of the earth, and the Saints are his servants. D&C 42:32 says, “Every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration.” In a parallel way, the Doctrine and Covenants asks members to receive other aspects of their lives by consecration: their clothing, their relationships with friends and family, their food, their health habits, and more. Essentially, everything, even the air we breathe, is God’s and given to human beings to use.\(^\text{16}\)

Teaching is, in a sense, also an opportunity to receive a stewardship by consecration. God gives teachers scriptures that are full of God's words as well as wisdom he gave to the prophets. God also provides a gathering place where members associate with one another. And those associations are organized by the relationships of teachers and students, or leaders and members, given through callings. A person who is called to be a teacher is called as a steward over a certain space and time, with the assignment of teaching the principles of the gospel, according to the directions of the Spirit. Teachers offer up their might, mind, and strength, and, like other consecrated offerings, they do it unto God.

In order to illustrate this further, bear with me as I write more casually as if I were training a newly called leader in a ward Young Women program.

Joseph Smith revealed to early Latterday Saints a law in Doctrine and Covenants 42 about how to live together as Saints. A lot of it deals with the law of consecration and property, but it also talks about consecrating other things, like teaching. So today I want to share with you what I see D&C 42:12–14 tells us about teaching gospel principles.
Verse 12 says to teach the principles of the gospel that are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. It also says that these scriptures have the fulness of the gospel. I love the idea that they have both the fulness and the principles, both the deeper and more complex things as well as the simple basics. The instructions in our teaching materials say to use the outlines or manuals as suggested guides or resources to help us teach, but they also say that the primary foundation for all that we are teaching is the scriptures themselves.

Talks by apostles and general leaders can be great examples of how to do this. These women and men have searched the scriptures diligently and know how to teach the gospel from them. In addition, using their talks in class can help the young women see how to read and understand scriptures better. These leaders have also allowed themselves to be changed by scripture, so you can often see the principles of the gospel coming through their life stories.

As your young women have questions, don't feel like you need to know all the answers. Remind them that they can find answers in the scriptures and through the Holy Ghost. That is kind of a leap of faith, for them and for us, but I encourage you to trust that they can find answers this way.

Verse 13 reminds us that we should be “directed by the Spirit” when we lead and teach. I encourage you to have faith that God really can send the Holy Ghost to guide you. Sometimes you’ll feel the Spirit when you are thinking about the topic you’re going to teach, or you’ll have ideas of how to present something. Also, sometimes you’ll feel guided by the Spirit in the classroom to do something you hadn’t planned on. In the Book of Mormon, Moroni talks about how they handled their church meetings. He says when elders conducted by the Spirit, sometimes they were led to preach, exhort, pray, supplicate, or sing. When you’re teaching, try to be open to the Spirit pushing you to do something you hadn’t planned on. You might feel impressed to exhort the young women to keep a commandment just discussed in the scriptures. You might feel impressed to allow for some silent time to pray or ponder. You might ask them to think of the words to a song or even ask the class to sing. So even though we say it’s lesson time, really any of these things can be part of teaching a lesson. It’s up to you to listen to the Spirit and respond to his direction.

Also, watch for how the Spirit might be prompting the young women during your lesson. I’ve watched some lessons where a girl’s answer was overlooked because it didn’t match the wording of the answer in the manual. I think she was genuinely seeking to understand scripture, but she came away distrusting her ability to learn on her own and listen to the Spirit. You might not expect that to be a problem when there are not manuals, except that we might still have an idea in our heads of what the girls should say in response. But instead, it’s exciting to think that the young women can teach us too. D&C 50 says the teacher and the student should be edified together when the Spirit is there. And D&C 46, which lists a lot of spiritual gifts, talks about how gifts are meant to be shared with each other.

Verse 14 in D&C 42 is a little tricky. It says that the Spirit comes by the prayer of faith, but it also says that sometimes the Spirit won’t come. Apostles have pointed out that sometimes God doesn’t tell us what to do because he wants us to make decisions and grow. When we pray for the Spirit and nothing seems to stop us, then I think we should feel confident in moving forward. But I’ve also had times where I can tell that what I’m doing or planning to do just isn’t quite right.

For example, once I had prepared to teach a lesson to help my young women learn something from 2 Nephi. I had pondered the lesson, and I was excited to have a lively discussion with them. But when I got into the classroom, it seemed like the girls were quieter than usual. It was hard to get conversation going about the lesson. In that
moment I said a quick prayer, and I decided to ask the girls what they were thinking about. It turned out that several of them were bothered by current world events and how they would affect them personally. We switched gears and addressed their concerns as a group. The lesson flowed, and the girls were comforted. God has promised to send us the Spirit when we teach, so feel free to pray for it before and during your lessons.

There is just one last thing I want to mention—a temptation that we can have as teachers. Don’t feel that you need to teach like someone else does. Just make your calling something that you and God are doing together. You can watch or talk to other teachers to get ideas, of course, but some people are tempted to think that if someone is a good teacher then they should just imitate how they teach. But it isn’t the methods of a teacher that make them a good teacher—it’s actually the Spirit. (And remember that the Spirit doesn’t always make someone cry. The gifts of the Spirit come in many different ways, like feeling enlightened, uplifted, or comforted. You may have seen a teacher once who tried to manufacture the Spirit by making their lesson overly emotional. That’s a pretty dangerous and really audacious thing to try. But what’s sad too is that they don’t need to work on that—the Spirit will do the real work.)

In summary, trust the scriptures and pray for the Spirit. Trust that God has a work he is after, and remember also that he trusts you! He has given you a stewardship to watch over and teach young women—his young women. As you give your time and efforts, he will give in return all the gifts of the Spirit you need to fulfill your stewardship.

Concluding thoughts
The "Laws of the Church of Christ" were a law for creating Zion. As part of that Zion city, teaching is seen as a stewardship, just like a stewardship of land or property. Teachers labor in Zion by studying the scriptures, reading, pondering what to teach, thinking, questioning, praying for the Spirit’s guidance, and loving their students. This labor yields fruits of knowledge, plans, outlines, ideas, wisdom, joy, testimony, and ability to understand the needs of students. All that the teacher has produced is brought to the moment of teaching, and in that moment the Spirit can choose to return these fruits back to the teacher to use in the lesson or to send other means, including the gifts of the Spirit. Seen from this point of view, teaching is another form of the law of consecration.

Elder Oaks has been concerned that the words “teaching by the Spirit” have become a slogan, and warns that there is a danger in using them like that. It seems to me that the greatest danger is that by using these words casually, members may miss the fact that Zion can actually be built. Some members assume that Zion is a place far away in the past or far away in the future. The Saints in 1831 were given this law not because they were in Zion already but because they were to build it.

When Nephi discusses Zion he points directly to the teachers. He mourns over teachers who “preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world.” Because these will not “labor for Zion,” Zion, along with them, will “perish” (2 Nephi 26:29–31). In Zion, teaching cannot be done for praise. Nothing can be done for the praise of the world. No matter what the members of the church are consecrating, yielding to the directions of the Spirit instead of to the praise of the world is the basis of consecration.

As Brigham Young put it, “Whenever we are disposed to give ourselves perfectly to righteousness, to yield all the powers and faculties of the soul . . . : when we are swallowed up in the will of Him who has called us; when we enjoy the peace and the smiles of our Father in Heaven, the things of His Spirit, and all the blessings we are capacitated to receive and improve upon, then are we in Zion, that is Zion.”\textsuperscript{17}
NOTES


4. See, for two examples, 1 Nephi 10:19 (“as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round”) and Alma 39:17 (“Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming?”).


6. There are several dozen references to this verse in Brigham Young University’s online scripture index, an index that tracks references to scriptures in public discourses of the LDS Church from the time of Joseph Smith up through the present. Only a few early references, found in the Journal of Discourses, take the idea seriously that there might be a time to not teach. The index can be accessed at http://scriptures.byu.edu/.


10. Staker, Hearken, O Ye People, 135–36.

11. The command to gather first before revelation comes is present elsewhere in scripture. For example, see Doctrine and Covenants 6:32 and Matthew 18:20, which state that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

12. The word head may be building again on Paul’s teachings. After a list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says, “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the
body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (vv. 11–12). A head is the part of the body that conducts the others. It sees what the other parts are doing and decides what should be done with them. To emphasize the connection between head in verse 29 and Paul’s image of the body of Christ, the first time that D&C 46 actually uses the word member—which Paul uses throughout his discussion—is in verse 29. It says, “That unto some it may be given to have all those gifts, that there may be a head, in order that every member may be profited thereby.”


14. It is worth mentioning that although things began to change with section 50, it was really the June Conference—held just a month later—that ended the debate on spiritual gifts. At this conference, there were those who received “the power,” and Joseph or others cast the devil out of those persons. It became clear, over and over again, which manifestations were of the Spirit and which were not. For the purposes of this paper, however, I limit my focus to the instruction in section 50 on how to discern spirits and how it compares to D&C 42:12–14.

15. I realize this language sounds harsh, and I admit that I do not always know when I myself am listening to the Spirit. I take comfort in D&C 50:16: “Behold ye shall answer this question yourselves; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto you; he that is weak among you hereafter shall be made strong.”

16. See King Benjamin’s discourse in Mosiah chapters 2–4.