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Lori C. Newbold

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One of the things that made the Savior the perfect teacher was his ability to teach 5,000 people and the one at the same time.

Cody Bell, Jesus Christ Teaching, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

See the One

LORI C. NEWBOLD

Lori C. Newbold (newboldlc@ldschurch.org) is director of training services of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion.

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I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today and share my love for the Savior, for you, and for the youth and young adults we have the privilege of serving.

I remember the powerful witness I received from the Holy Ghost the first time I read the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer: “I believe that to the degree you perform, according to the challenge and charge which you have, the image of Christ does become engraved upon your countenances. And for all practical purposes, in that classroom at that time and in that expression and with that inspiration, you are He and He is you.”¹ The thought that I have the privilege of representing the Savior in my responsibilities has been a motivating desire and governing truth throughout my career in seminaries and institutes.

Elder Gong taught us in our most recent evening with a General Authority that one of the things that made the Savior the perfect teacher was

his ability to teach 5,000 people and the one at the same time. He stated, “This is a miracle we teachers seek—to teach our whole class and each person in the class. This requires attending to the 5,000 and the one. It invites addressing general concerns and individual needs.”² Have you ever wondered how the Savior was able to do that?

I want to share an experience I had in my second year of teaching where the Lord tutored me by helping me see what it meant to represent him in the classroom. I had a young man, about fifteen years old, in one of my classes. I knew within the first few days that I did not have the patience for his darling personality and felt this was going to be a long semester of trying to exercise a gift that I did not possess. I prayed for the ability to love him and all my students.

During the second week of class, when this young man stood up to give the devotional and shared a little more information about his life, I was granted the gift to see him as the Lord does and immediately feel an increase of love for him. He shared that his parents were going through a divorce and his mother had not only left the Church, but was fighting against it. I could see in his face the heartache and confusion he was feeling as he shared his story. I honestly don’t remember the spiritual thought that he shared, but I remember what the Holy Ghost taught me. The thought came into my mind, “Take off your shoes because I am about to grant you entrance into a heart. I am trusting you to be a faithful female influence in this young man’s life, and I need you to love him as I love him.” From that very moment I changed. My heart changed. I saw him—really saw him—as a son of God, with divine potential, with spiritual gifts and much to offer our class. Not much about his behavior changed that semester, but I had changed. And in that change we had some wonderful experiences together. I will be forever grateful for this young man and the opportunity the Lord provided for me to have a change of heart and vision.

I continually marvel at our Father in Heaven’s ability to not only know but also meet every individual’s needs. I know that he sees, understands, and knows me perfectly. And even more, he loves me perfectly. I also know that he sees me as one with divine potential, and he knows that with his help, I will become like him. I know he has that same belief about each of you and every young man and woman that walks through our doors. He sees them perfectly and wants to save each one of them. He sees beyond their appearance and

behavior and chooses to focus on their divine qualities and strengths. And as teachers, he expects us to do the same.

This year we are introducing a new priority titled “See the One.” The focus of this priority is for each one of us to develop the Christlike ability to see each student’s individual needs, strengths, and divine potential. Our hope is that each of us will develop or deepen the Christlike ability to see beyond labels and outward appearances and learn to see each student as a unique individual with divine potential and treat him or her accordingly.

Each student walks into our classrooms with individual circumstances, needs, and challenges that impact their learning experience. It is important to remember that seminary or institute is only a part of each student’s life—a vital part, but still only a part. Learning styles, cultural differences, disabilities, addiction, and loss and grief are just some of the factors that could affect a student’s learning experience. Circumstances and labels do not define our students but give us the opportunity to see and love them as the Savior does. Ours is the sacred privilege and responsibility of doing more to help those whose burdens are heavy and who come to class desperately seeking the hope the Savior of all mankind provides.

In pondering this sacred responsibility to see the one, I have learned much from the Apostle Paul’s teachings in 1 Corinthians 12. I would like to share three lessons I have learned from studying this chapter.

Lesson One

Paul begins his teachings about the body of Christ and value of each member by teaching about spiritual gifts. As I studied verses 1–11, I could not help but wonder if one of the keys to seeing individuals as the Savior sees them is to first recognize they have gifts and strengths that need to be seen and utilized. As we see students this way, we will recognize and draw upon their strengths rather than focusing on shortcomings or undesirable behaviors. At times a student’s behavior does not accurately reflect his or her worth. One simple skill a teacher can develop is to pause before immediately responding to a student’s comment or behavior and then consider two or three possible reasons “why” a student may be responding or acting this way. This will help a teacher avoid acting impulsively and better recognize a student’s spiritual gifts.

In striving to remember each student’s divine potential, we must also recognize that circumstances or disabilities may impede their desire or ability

to learn. This requires that we more carefully craft learning experiences that invite and inspire individuals to exercise agency to use their spiritual gifts in the learning process. This process is not easy, but when we seek the Lord's help, he will help us know how we can reach his children.

One experience I had where I learned the value of recognizing spiritual gifts in my students was through one of my students who was not excited about reading in or out of class. She had a great talent for music, and as I prayed about how to reach her, the Lord answered with something I had never tried before. I gave her a schedule of the lessons and asked her to find a song for each lesson that could be played in class that would help teach one of the truths in that block of scripture. This required her to read outside of class in order to identify truths so she could find a song. This also allowed her the opportunity to bear testimony in class of what she learned from her preparation. Within a few short weeks, I watched this student's love for the Savior grow and her engagement in class improve. She is currently serving as a full-time missionary and not only reading but teaching the scriptures and sharing her gift of testimony through music.

Lesson Two

Paul emphasizes that each member of the body has value. In 1 Corinthians 12:14–18, he teaches us:

For the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

I love the imagery of body parts fulfilling different but needful roles. The hand cannot replace the foot. The ear cannot replace the eye. Each has a unique and important role, and each contributes differently. Each is essential for the body to be able to function at full capacity.

Elder Holland used a different analogy to teach this same truth: "It is by divine design that not all the voices in God's choir are the same. It takes variety—sopranos and altos, baritones and basses—to make rich music. . . . When we disparage our uniqueness or try to conform to fictitious stereotypes . . . we

lose the richness of tone and timbre that God intended when He created a world of diversity."³

In order to effectively help each student become "converted . . . while they are with us,"⁴ we must believe that each student has value and act accordingly. In light of these truths, I invite each of you to ask yourself these two questions: First, "Do I honestly believe that every one of my students has value and can become a contributing member?" Second, "Do my actions reflect that belief?"

I pray the Lord will help us be governed more by this belief.

Lesson Three

Paul teaches that we should show the same care for each member. He states, "There should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

This was a powerful self-reflection verse for me: Do I give "the same care" to each student? Do I focus more on students who seem to contribute in obvious ways? Is it easier for me to love those who raise their hands and always have their scriptures out ready to share testimony and meaningful comments? Is it easier for me to give love and attention to those who love me, who love class, who come on time and only miss because of a life-threatening illness? Do other students notice when I don't give "the same care" to each student? And how does that affect the environment of love, respect, and purpose in my classroom? Students are more likely to see and treat each other as the Savior does when each of us models that for them.

As we strive to represent the Savior in our teaching and develop the ability to see as he sees, we must remember (1) all have spiritual gifts to contribute, (2) every member is valuable, and (3) we need to show "the same care" for each member.

I would like to share one additional lesson I have learned as I have pondered the need for this priority. In our day the adversary, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). As the great identity thief, he continually seeks to rob individuals of divine identity and connection with heaven. We must develop the ability to see as the Savior sees so we can help others understand their divine potential and be true to the Lord in a confusing world that calls "evil good, and good evil; that put[s] darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

One of my great scripture heroines who models this ability so beautifully is Abigail. She is described in the Old Testament as "a woman of good

understanding, and of a beautiful countenance.” She was married to Nabal, a man “evil in his doings” (1 Samuel 25:3). After Nabal insulted and refused to help David, David gathered his men with the intent to slay Nabal and his household. When Nabal’s servants told Abigail of the impending danger, she immediately gathered supplies and set out to meet David.

Upon meeting David, Abigail bowed herself before him and, as a type of Christ, assumed responsibility for an offense she did not commit, and she pled for his forgiveness (see 1 Samuel 25:23–24). What did Abigail see in Nabal that motivated her to be his advocate?

What did she see in David that caused her to say, “I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days?” (1 Samuel 25:28).

Why did she choose, in such a critical moment, to remind David of who he was and the promises the Lord has made? What impact did her act of faith have?

I love David’s response to her when he declared: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand” (1 Samuel 25:32–33).

I believe in that moment, reminiscent of President Packer’s promise, Abigail had “the image of Christ . . . engraved upon [her countenance]. And for all practical purposes, in that classroom at that time and in that expression and with that inspiration, [she was He and He was she].”⁵

I testify that we have a similar opportunity to see others as he sees them and to help them see the divine within themselves.

Words cannot express the love and gratitude I feel for those who have modeled this Christlike attribute in my life. First and foremost, my angel mother has always seen me as one with divine potential and spiritual gifts. She has always seen me as a contributor—even when I did not act as one—and has worked tirelessly to help me develop that potential. I have had priesthood leaders who brought hope to my life by conveying Heavenly Father’s love for me and reminding me of my worth. My own seminary and institute teachers—many who are watching this today—saw something in me that I could not see in myself. My career has been beautifully enriched by men and women who have lifted me and led me to the Savior through their examples of seeing the one.

I am eternally grateful for the ways in which the Lord continues to show me that he sees me as one of worth and value. He has blessed me with gifts and provides opportunities for me to use those gifts to help others become like him. And I know that he also does that for each of you and for each of our students.

The past few months, I have had a beautiful experience studying the scriptures with the focus on how the Savior sees the one and teaches according to that vision. Learning from him directly has changed me. I invite you to take the same opportunity. He is the perfect model. There are countless examples of how he crafted learning experiences and lessons to meet individual needs and better help those he taught to understand their divine potential.

My dear friends, I pray that our Father in Heaven will continue to increase our individual capacity to see as he sees, to love as he loves, and to act as he would act. I pray that we will seek this gift and find ways to obtain or deepen it. I pray that we will continue to strive to have the image of the Savior in our countenances as we stand before our students each day. I know we can develop this gift as we seek his help. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. **RE**

Notes

1. Boyd K. Packer, “The Ideal Teacher” (address to seminary and institute faculty, 28 June 1962), 5–6; also in *Teaching Seminary: Preservice Readings* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 141.

2. Gerrit W. Gong, “And Jesus Said unto Them: I Am the Bread of Life” (evening with a General Authority, 17 February 2017), <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/evening-with-a-general-authority/2017/02/and-jesus-said-unto-them-i-am-the-bread-of-life>.

3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Songs Sung and Unsung,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 49.

4. Henry B. Eyring, “We Must Raise Our Sights” (address given at the Church Educational System conference, 14 August 2001), 2.

5. Packer, “Ideal Teacher,” 6.