



9-2019

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Kim B. Clark

Barbara Morgan Gardner

Scott C. Esplin

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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Clark, Kim B.; Gardner, Barbara M. and Esplin, Scott C. "A Lifetime of Deep Learning." *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 20, no. 3 (2019): 1-15. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol20/iss3/2>

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Elder Kim B. Clark

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## *A Lifetime of Deep Learning*

ELDER KIM B. CLARK, BARBARA MORGAN GARDNER, AND SCOTT C. ESPLIN

Kim B. Clark was recently released as the Church Commissioner of Education for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is now a professor in the BYU Marriott School of Business.

Barbara Morgan Gardner ([barbara\\_gardner@byu.edu](mailto:barbara_gardner@byu.edu)) is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Scott C. Esplin ([scott\\_esplin@byu.edu](mailto:scott_esplin@byu.edu)) is the publications director of the Religious Studies Center.

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**Gardner:** Thank you for the chance to interview you previously, and now one final time as you conclude your service as Church Commissioner of Education. The question I've asked every time I've met with you is, What have you learned this last year that you didn't already know before being Commissioner? What has stood out to you as a Commissioner? What experiences have you had?

**Clark:** First, I think what happens is that I relearn things. And each time they go deeper or I get more confident. Second, one thing's really clear—there's a lot of help from heaven in this work, even more than I had imagined. There are so many things that have happened that you just stand in awe. So it makes me think—I've joked to people, but I don't think it's a joke—there's got to be a group of people up there assigned to this situation in heaven. They are working on Church education.

**Gardner:** I personally find that fascinating because that's the same answer you gave last year when I met with you. You probably recognize that, but of all the things you've learned, it was that the Lord's hand is in everything that's been happening.

**Clark:** He's in everything. It's just amazing. So there is a corollary, which is that my prayers change. My prayers change to "Help me have a pure heart so that I want what Thou wouldst want, so my desires are perfectly aligned with Thy desires." There's a plan, and we just need to make sure that what we're doing is really aligned with it. That means in everything we do. So that's another really powerful thing—to try to pray for a pure heart so that you don't have any other desires except that the Lord's will be done. Because that's why we are here.

**Esplin:** I have a related question. You have in part opened my eyes to the breadth of the Church Educational System. I most frequently associate the Church Educational System with seminaries and institutes, the Church universities, and the Church schools. But what you are discussing is much bigger than that. What can you share about your understanding and your feelings for the Church's role in educating all of God's children, regardless of membership in the Church, regardless of educational level? It seems like your vision is larger than what many of us in seminaries and institutes or religious education think about when we consider Church education.

**Clark:** Go back in your mind to 1970 when Neal A. Maxwell became the Commissioner of Education. Joseph Fielding Smith was the President of the Church, but Harold B. Lee had the education portfolio. They called Elder Maxwell and gave him a responsibility to come and think about all of Church education. They did a big study and held numerous discussions: "Should the Church invest more in higher education? Should it invest in religious education?" The higher education question was really interesting, and the report was fascinating because it anticipated BYU-Pathway Worldwide when the technology was still a dream. They talked about your television talking to you and things like that. They said, "The day will come when you won't need bricks and mortar." But the decision was made to invest in religious education. That began this huge project to offer seminary wherever the Church was established. Today it's not a big deal to open up a seminary. You don't have to get permission from the Church Board of Education. You don't have to check the budget or anything. The stake president calls and says to a coordinator, "I think we need another seminary class." Or if you form a new stake, you've got to figure out new seminary classes. So you just do that all over the Church. And as the Church grows all over the world, seminary grows. In the fall of 2015, we took a proposal to the board to apply that same idea to education generally.

**Gardner:** Was that when you first started?

**Clark:** August of 2015 was when I started. The proposed policy read, "The Church Educational System will provide opportunities for education to the members of the Church wherever the Church is organized." Now, how to do that, when to do it, where to do it are all questions ultimately decided by the Board. We already do it with religious education, and that's clear. In higher education, the founding of BYU-Pathway was a commitment to provide educational opportunities in higher education across the Church. And we have just begun, just scratched the surface. We also have been exploring pilot programs in secondary education. We are asking questions like: Are there things we could do that would be helpful and useful? Is it the right thing for us to be in some kind of secondary education—perhaps, for example, providing after-school classes to support children in school—beyond the Church schools that we already have? Can we provide educational opportunities in a way that's sustainable and blesses people's lives? Is it the right thing to do? The answers to those questions are still pending; we are still in a pilot stage. In time we'll get answers to those questions. Sometimes the answers don't come right now because the time is not quite right, and sometimes they come even faster than you expect.

I'll give you another great example. As we're working to explore options, we have learned to conduct these pilots; study them; present them to the prophets, seers, and revelators; and let them be prophets. So we're using the right approach, and then we just have to see what the prophets, especially *the* prophet, feel is right. Here's a good example that goes back to around 2005–6. Especially for Youth, or EFY, of course, had a long, very successful history. Permission was granted to run a pilot to do EFYs in Europe and in Mexico to see if EFY could work there. They were hugely successful, by any measure. They were a great experience for the youth; they were sustainable and doable. Everything worked great with locations and staffing. A proposal came to the board, and the board said, "No. Shut them down." President Hinckley's response at the time was, "If we do this, we will undercut the Church organization, the youth organization. It won't grow and mature the way it should because BYU would come in and run the program." Now, fast forward to today—all across the international Church conferences called For the Strength of Youth have been developed. Essentially, these are EFY-like programs run by the stakes, the coordinating councils, and the areas of the Church. They're a big success. And now, FSU is going to be part of the new

Child and Youth effort both internationally and in the US and Canada. BYU will bring all of their EFY experience and help run FSY in the US and Canada. And all of this is happening today because of the inspiration of the prophet of God.

Everything I see and feel teaches me that the Lord desires to bless His children with education. Education is a religious responsibility for parents and children. Learning is essential in building the kingdom and is part of the plan of salvation. Exactly how we implement education we have to decide, but the Holy Ghost is in this process. I believe that educational opportunities will happen all across the Church. In what form? We'll see. But I think the technologies are moving forward to make those opportunities possible in ways and at a cost that we would not have thought possible twenty years ago. For years, going back to that 1970s study, people have had a dream to extend opportunities for education to many, many more people in the Church. For example, when Merrill Bateman was president of BYU, he thought about expanding educational opportunities. He tried some things, but the technology wasn't quite there, and it got shut down. But with the growth of the Church and with the tremendous reach of the Seminaries and Institutes program, we have been able to open Pathway sites all across the earth in five or six hundred locations.

I know there is a hunger for education among God's children, especially in the kingdom—just a hunger to learn and to gain knowledge. It's amazing to watch. You can go into one of these Pathway locations and feel the yearning for education. It's palpable. These are people who never thought they would get an education, never imagined they would have this opportunity. They had no hope, therefore, of what education could bring into their lives. They once thought, "Well, I'm here, and Heavenly Father's providing this for other people but not for me." Now, however, they feel His love, and they have hope. It's just like feeding starving people.

**Esplin:** This makes Pathway, and other initiatives like this, more expansive than other educational opportunities that have been offered by the Church.

**Clark:** I'll tell you another fascinating thing that happened this year. Going back many years, the Seminaries and Institutes people here in these offices have wrestled with the question, "Is there any way for us to be aligned with Sunday School and the Church in the study of the scriptures? Can they line up in any way?" The answer was always, "It's completely impossible." We went through one exercise about two years ago where we really tried. We

concluded, "This is really hard. We just can't do it." We actually did this in conjunction with the individuals in the Priesthood and Family Department who are responsible for all the Church's curriculum, and they agreed. They looked at it and said, "Yes, it's too hard." Then in October of 2018, President Russell M. Nelson said, "Home-centered gospel learning—that's what we need." Then he announced the change to the Sunday schedule and the change to the integrated curriculum. One day Sister Bonnie Cordon, Young Women General President, said to Chad Webb, administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, "You should do this." He said, "No, it's too hard." She said, "I don't care. You should do it." Chad came to me and told me what happened, and I said, "Let's think it through."

You know what changed? The prophet said, "home-centered, Church-supported." That changes the whole thing because you don't say, "Can we do this?" You flip it around and say, "We're doing this. So what do we need to do? We are going to do it. What are the issues?" And so we sat here and talked, and they went to work and said, "Well, here is what we'll have to do, and it is messy." It is messy because you have schools starting at different times of the year and there are other challenges. But there never was a question of, "Are we going to do it?" We already had answered that. And we took it to the board, and they approved it. Then we confronted a huge challenge because the different school calendars are a real problem. What are we going to do about trimesters, and how are we going to handle programs that start in February or in June? How are we going to do this? We started working and solutions came.

Then we confronted something that was much more difficult. We said, "Well, you know, if the curriculum in seminary was not sequential but doctrinal, it would actually be a lot easier to integrate with the Church curriculum." So then we had to confront changing the practice of sequential teaching of the scriptures in seminary that goes way back.

**Gardner:** It has a lot of emotion.

**Clark:** There was a lot of emotion, but we made the decision and prayed for Chad and his team. It was absolutely time for this new approach. Now we need to create new manuals. We decided the courses should connect the doctrine and principles from throughout the breadth of the scriptures, rather than focus on a single passage at a time. So instead of teaching a little about a lot of verses, we're going to spend more time discussing and learning and applying the fundamental principles of the restored gospel. That decision

coincided with another thing that happened to us as we talked and learned. We talked and listened to students and learned that our students don't know the doctrine as well as we want them to—basic things like repentance and faith. So we went to work from there. But that all came—that was heaven's work. It felt that way too; it felt like, "Oh, it's time. You're supposed to do this."

**Esplin:** Wonderful. Thank you for sharing. You addressed several of the questions I had wondered about for our readers. In the interview with yourself, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Sister Bonnie Cordon, and Brother Chad Webb announcing the realigning of the seminary curriculum, you stated, "We are going to do this, and then we'll figure out how to make it happen." What can you share with readers regarding the process of figuring these things out? You've done some of that. Is there anything else that would be helpful for our readers?

**Clark:** One thing that is really helpful is to realize, and this was the eye-opener, that the students in all parts of the world start in the scriptures in January with their family, and they're studying the scriptures all year. So that means now we actually are supporting what is happening in the home. Before we thought of the families supporting *us*. But now we're going to support the families. How do we do that? What's the best way to support? Well, we have a calendar, a school calendar. But not to worry, the youth are reading the scriptures even in summer. It doesn't matter if you start in March with us because they've already been in the scriptures for a couple of months. They're doing the reading and learning with their families. Then we worry about things like assessments, but you say, "Well, they're reading their scriptures." So, what kind of requirements do we establish, what kind of assessments? In making those decisions we can take into account this home-based reading program that is going on all year long. It makes a huge difference.

The second thing has been to abandon, where necessary, the claim that "this is how we do this," and instead say, "That was then, this is now. So how are we going to do this?" Once you open your mind up that way, a lot of things occur, and the Holy Ghost can talk to you. This is a principle that's true everywhere—if you're trying to get something done and you're working hard to have the Spirit teach you, but you're stuck and you say, "We can't do this," it'll never work. You're stuck there, and the Spirit can't talk to you. The Spirit can't do anything to you because you've already said, "I'm not going to do it." But once you open up your mind and start praying for help to do it, the Spirit can talk to you. I'm talking now about Chad and his administrators. They

were sitting there wrestling with these mighty problems like trimesters. They worry about things like, "How is this going to work for somebody that starts school in September, but they are not in seminary?" These are knotty problems. But they prayed about it, and then somebody got an idea, a revelation. They said, "What if we didn't start the Book of Mormon (the 2020 scripture) until March instead of January? What would that look like? Run it out. "Oh. That would actually make it work." Because otherwise, your kids will end up getting a quarter of this and a quarter of that. But if we start in March, that's now the beginning of a trimester. So how would that work? Once again, they realize that the students would be reading the Book of Mormon with their families starting in January. And the realization settles in that starting in March will work.

**Gardner:** Just to clarify, would they be starting the Book of Mormon, in 1 Nephi, in March?

**Clark:** Yes.

**Gardner:** So they're going back to kind of catch up with their parents, with their families and the Church?

**Clark:** Yes, except they're now going to focus on doctrine, and they're there every day, for fifty minutes, so they're going to cover a lot more ground. But it's OK, it will be familiar ground for them. And it works to accomplish what needs to be done in a trimester. They figured it out. You can look at things and say, "Well, it's not perfect." Is anybody worried about losing two months? I'm in the room, and I responded, "Sounds good to me. That'll be OK." Everybody will figure this out, starting with study in families, and seminary will pick up. There's a little period of time that's not matched up, but it really simplifies things. The alternative to that is really hard. And getting continuity in studying the scriptures by starting in March is way better for kids educationally, so we made that little compromise.

**Gardner:** So they will continue to take the previous year's studies through March?

**Clark:** No, not *through* March, *to* March. When January comes the students in a trimester system would be in their middle semester. They will finish the previous year's scripture in that trimester, and then begin the Book of Mormon at the beginning of March. If you run it out over multiple years, it actually works.

**Gardner:** So teachers have to be on the ball, right?

**Clark:** Oh, yes. Now you have to train the teachers, and you have to help them understand this is what we're doing. It's a lot of work to make this happen. That's exactly what's happened. It's revelation by receiving counsel and sitting in council, opening your mind to the Spirit. It's freeing up, getting rid of constraints you thought were there. It's being ready to say, "No, we're going to do this."

**Esplin:** One of the changes will be the long-held focus on sequential study. In the interview explaining the realignment, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, "This is going to require some modification of the curriculum. We're going to go deeper on some matters. It won't be sequential study; it will be more doctrinally based and always focused on the Savior." And you added, "We are also, through the curriculum, going to make it so that they go deeper into doctrine. And that's been an objective of this change—instead of covering lots of things a little bit, we want to cover a few things really deep." What counsel might you share with teachers so that they can facilitate this deeper learning throughout this new curriculum? How can teachers, who might be very familiar with a sequential approach, change their own preconceived notions or constraints to accommodate what you and Elder Holland described?

**Clark:** We'll do our best to support everybody who is going to teach. So eventually they won't need us; they'll be able to do it. But what I would say is, in addition to that support, the same principle that we just articulated for how to do this calendar works in how to teach. You open up your mind and your heart, and the Spirit will teach you. You'll know what to do because this is from heaven. We didn't just make this up. We didn't sit back here in our little offices and think of all the cool ways we could change seminary. This came from heaven. It's just like whom the Lord calls, He qualifies—He will teach you. It might feel a little bit awkward, but my guess is it'll feel just so good to be able to teach youth certain things and to teach deeper and help the young people. That means you'll have more time to engage in deep learning with the students. Because you're not going to be concerned about covering a certain section of material, it's going to be about helping the students learn more deeply the fundamental principles of the gospel. You will also give them the time and opportunity to raise questions. In a sense, doctrinal mastery will still have the scripture part, but doctrinal mastery has been integrated into the curriculum rather than being a special thing to do on certain days. That means there will be more opportunity to explore, "What does this mean for

my life? How is this going to affect what I do? What am I going to do about this? How can I be more effective in learning how to apply this doctrine in my life? What does it mean for me?" I think it will be great. I think people will like it. I know the students will like it. The students will love it. The students love doctrinal mastery, and so do the teachers. They'll go into all sorts of wonderful doctrine. I think it will be great. I think where it's headed is that the curriculum writers are trying to think through, "How much time should we spend on what topics, and what doctrines?" And so, you might spend a whole week on something, or it might be two- or three-week class sessions. It will vary with the topic.

**Esplin:** Thank you. The last question from the announcement was something that you offered to teachers during the interview. You said, "We also hope that—and this is speaking to the teachers—we'll do away with the idea that you have to cover material. We are not really about 'covering material.' We want to dive deep into some things—get a flavor for the flow of the book, the way it was written—and yet give the students an opportunity to really dive deep and really understand the doctrines of the gospel. We want the students to live them—to really learn how to live the principles. And then we want them to become what the principles help us become."

How can teachers make this change? Are there things that might change with the design of the curriculum relating to pressure to cover material or to go deeper? How can we, as teachers, catch this vision that you're sharing as the announcement was presented?

**Clark:** I think one way, in part, comes through the curriculum itself. Take a verse that you really love and think about. "What would I do if I were going to spend a whole week on this verse? What would we do? What would we talk about? How would we spend a week?" Take, for example, 2 Nephi. I know this one because I've done stake conferences in the North America Southwest Area, and this is the scriptural theme for that area. It's 2 Nephi 31:20: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men." So, you take that verse, and you say, "How would we spend a week on it?" Five class sessions, what will you do? Well, it's rich. How is it rich? Well, it's got at least four or five topics in there in the whole verse. You know, what does it mean to "press forward"? What does "with steadfastness in Christ" mean? Where does that come from? How do you develop it? What is it? What does a "perfect brightness of hope" mean in your life? I mean, what is "hope"? What does it

mean to you? And, how do you “love all men”? What is that? Then, “You have not come this far, except by relying on the merits of Christ.” What does that mean? “Relying wholly on the merits.” How do you rely on His merits? What does that mean? And so forth. Then you can say, you can go doctrinal, go into other scriptures, figure out what this means, find other places where those words are used. Teach the students how to study. But then take it one step further and say, “What do you think it means to ‘press forward’ in your life? What does that mean? Why does it say pressing? Why the word ‘press’? That conjures up an image of opposition—what is that opposition?” Then you get a long list and say, “How do you deal with that? How do you do this every day? What does it mean to ‘press forward with a steadfastness in Christ’? How do you do that?” And pretty soon you’ll say, “Oh, I could spend a year on this.” And I think that’s one way to help them see, “Oh, that’s what this is about.” Now, it’s not going to be just one verse. You could spend, as you know, an entire course on 1 and 2 Nephi. You could do an entire course on 2 Nephi.

I mean, it’s incredibly rich. I mean with all the Isaiah material, people say, “Oh, Isaiah.” But then you say, “No, let’s take 2 Nephi 25 and use it as our guide.” And we can spend days and days on that. There are all sorts of things in there, and it’s rich. And then you say, “Oh, that’s what this is about. OK.” So we’re going to see Nephi, and we’re going to understand his family’s journey. We’re going to see Nephi writing all these amazing things in his life and learn what he’s trying to teach us. We’ll see Jacob, and we’ll have Sherem. We’ll study the allegory, and we’ll have all this rich stuff. But when we get to the allegory, you’re going to spend more than ten minutes because that’s the gathering of Israel. But you’ll say, “Oh, I see how he did this.” And we’re going to pick and choose things that are doctrinally rich and go deeper into them.

**Esplin:** The manuals will help do some of that, but then it will fall to teachers as well to prayerfully get guidance for what their students need.

**Clark:** It’s an opportunity for the teachers to say, “I really love this stuff. Let’s really get into it. Let’s really take the time to read carefully and yet always remember to bring it back to the students.” Because in the end, it’s all about the Savior and them. It’s all about the Savior. How is He affecting your life? What are you feeling? What are you doing to have the Atonement of Christ bless you? I think it’s going to be really fun. I think the teachers are going to love this. Now, it’ll be a little scary. But at first we’ll do our best to give support, and then the new manuals will start to appear.

**Gardner:** It seems like it’s a strong connection to the teaching and learning emphasis before, but giving even more tailoring to allow the teachers to understand what needs to happen in the classroom.

**Clark:** You’ve got to engage the youth, because they’ll respond. Just that question of, “Do you guys ever experience any opposition? What kind? Make a list. So, let’s pick a couple, what can we do about this? Can the Savior help you with this? What can you do? Can we help each other? We’re in this together! How do we overcome opposition?”

**Gardner:** You’ve reiterated a number of things in our interviews over the years. Frankly, one of the interviews wasn’t a formal one at all. I visited you at BYU–Idaho when you were first called, and you had mentioned that same idea: we receive this revelation from the Lord, and we are doing it. And your comment, I believe, was, “And we just don’t look back. Whatever happened in the past is the past—we move forward.”

So, on that same topic, this is more toward your experience of working now with youth, young adults, and teachers who are struggling, perhaps, with authority and prophets today. I know when I talked to you last time, we had a similar conversation about using the doctrine to help understand, and the internet age, and everything else. What I’ve noticed lately, in our classes and just through talking to people, is that it seems like some of the youth are just struggling with the idea of authority, with the idea of a prophet on the earth today. And with my experience in the past, you have a very strong testimony of having a prophet on the earth. I’m just wondering how you would help students, young adults, and even teachers gain and understand the role of a prophet and the importance of a prophet today. You sit in a very specific position where you are working with the Brethren on a regular basis, and you are following this revelation from them. So, if you could just guide us and help us and help teachers.

**Clark:** I think it starts with your understanding of who Heavenly Father is and who the Savior is because everything flows from that. There’s a prophet on the earth who speaks for Them. I think, speaking personally and for my own children, if you have a testimony of your Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and you have faith in Them, then you’ve come a long way toward understanding the role of the prophets because they speak for God. He speaks through them. So that’s one of the ways Heavenly Father speaks to us. There are some basic questions that you can use to help students understand. “Do you believe in the Book of Mormon? Do you have a testimony of the Book of Mormon?”

If so, then you now have a source where you can see prophets in action. And you can see why God has prophets on the earth. It all revolves around understanding the plan of salvation. Why are we on earth? And why does it work this way? It all has to do with the purpose of our mortal life, our agency, the Lord's work, His Church, and His living prophets. So, I think that's how you help people: with a foundation of understanding about why the prophets are there. And we can see what happens when they're not. There's a number of things that all wrap around the plan of salvation that, I think, make sense when you have living prophets. So, when I speak in June, I'm speaking to my last S&I broadcast. And I talk about this. I talk about personal revelation. And one of the ways you get personal revelation is through living prophets. They speak to us. They speak the words of the Lord.

**Gardner:** It seems like there's a bigger divide now. And maybe it's just me that's seeing this. I was surprised by how many students really struggled with a recent policy change. The first class at 9:00 in the morning? Great. 10:00? Dampening down a little bit. My 1:00 class? There were more questions. By 2:00? They were questioning. I found it fascinating to go from excitement to questioning within a four-hour period of time, and of course a lot of it's just the internet and what they're seeing on Facebook and what they're seeing on the tweets and everything else. And I've felt, for me, and other teachers have as well, this need to help the students recognize that the prophet speaks for God. To really get that testimony deep down. Which is what you're saying, but it's surprising to me how many would say, "Well, how can the prophet be the prophet if he changed his mind from what he said three years ago to now?" And it's just this basic . . . for me it seems like a basic lack of testimony where they think they have a testimony but they're questioning the prophet.

**Clark:** There is no question about that. That is why I started where I started. Do you know your Heavenly Father? Do you have a testimony of Him? Do you have a testimony of the Savior? Do you have a testimony of the Book of Mormon? Do you know it's true? OK then. The other thing that I found helpful with this particular change we're talking about here is to help people find analogies that they relate to. I think a really good one is Zion's Camp. Here you have a prophet that receives a revelation from the Lord, which he wrote down and said, "OK, put these people, take them together, go to Missouri. And we're taking our weapons, we're going to march, we're going to liberate our brothers and sisters." At least, that's what they thought. And, you know, that was a hard trek. That was a tough, tough road. Not a piece of

cake to walk a thousand miles. And it was tough on Joseph and everybody else. And then the purpose got changed. You know, they get there, and they're rescued by the storm from being annihilated by the Missourians. And they're there and get sick—it's just a mess. And some of them die. And then the Lord says, "OK, that's enough. Let's go home." And then the people say, "What? We've come all this way. We haven't done anything!" There was a lot of dissension. But Joseph said, "The Lord has spoken. We're going home." And they turned around and walked home. People who have a secular eye, or a worldly eye, cannot make sense out of that. It just seems so strange. But that's exactly how the Lord works. And in that group were all the leaders of the Church. Brigham Young spoke for all of them when he said, "Everything I learned about how to run this Church I learned in Zion's Camp." So, it wasn't about liberating the brothers and sisters anyway, it was about something else.

**Gardner:** That's where I think a lot of the students are missing it.

**Clark:** And the Lord doesn't tell us why. We just have to trust Him. But I heard one of the members of the First Presidency make a really interesting comment, "You know, sometimes the Lord gives the whole Church a revelation that is designed to help some person. And sometimes it's changed to help another person." We just don't know. So we trust, because we trust in the Lord. We love Him, we love His prophet, we know President Nelson, we know these Brethren. And they're not capricious by any means. It's not random. This is not something they cooked up. There's a reason. And we fully don't know what it is. And that's very often how the Lord works. Actually, on a personal level I've sat in counsel with people who say, "Why did this happen? Why did—" I had a young man who was sitting in that chair right there say to me, "I pled with the Lord not to take away my physical strength." And now he's hunched over from a car accident, with terrible back injuries and a shattered neck. He's really big, six feet five inches, a big guy who was always really strong—he could go all day long. Now he said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, there are times when He doesn't really tell us why. He just doesn't." And that's true for prophets too. But we trust them and love them because we love the Lord. It's not because we have faith in President Nelson. I mean, you might have faith in him, but it's faith in the Lord. And you know he speaks for the Lord.

**Gardner:** Which for me, is why I hope this doctrinal experience framework works, right? Because I would say, as a teacher, the students think they want more history—this is from my perspective—they think they want more

context, they think they want everything else. But I'm saying, they're leaving the Church. So let's make sure they're getting the doctrine straight.

**Clark:** I think I've told you this before—we get all this stuff. People teaching context and history. The daughter of one of my general authority colleagues took a class in the New Testament, and in the first seven weeks they never, ever, opened the Gospels. No. Never read a verse. This is all context. But it was not the New Testament. It wasn't about the doctrine and the Savior. Some context is helpful, but you've got to read the scriptures.

**Gardner:** Elder Clark, the last question. After seeing you over this four-year framework as Church Commissioner of Education, I wonder if you have any general thoughts, anything specific that you'd like to share? Are there themes or things that you have learned?

**Clark:** I know this: Education, of any kind—religious or secular—is really important to the Lord. It is really important. He cares about it. And He cares about it because it's an important part of the plan of salvation. There are a lot of things that people need to learn. Elder Bednar said this in his book, he said, "The overarching purpose of the plan of salvation is to learn." It's not to learn specific things; it's to become like our Father in Heaven. We have to learn. You have to learn in those ways. So that's been a sweet experience to be part of. And there's just lots of work to be done. And it's been that way for a long, long time. And I imagine that all those brethren who have gone before us, all those sisters who spent all that time teaching the kids, rejoice to see this happen.

I have a great-great-grandmother who is named Lucy Hawes. She lived in Payson, Utah, most of her life. She was so committed to getting her children an education that she just did everything in her power. There are amazing stories about what she did and the sacrifices she made. The work she did. In fact, she once said, and I think she got it right, "If I were a man, I would be wealthy." It's true. Because she was really capable. She was constrained by the world where she lived, but she made gloves, she made rugs, she took in boarders, she did all sorts of things to make money. She put it all into her children and their education. I'm grateful for that because it came down.

One of her children was a man named Josiah. Josiah Hickman was in the Church Educational System. He taught in academies—he taught at Brigham Young Academy for a while. And he was one of the very first Latter-day Saints to go east for a graduate degree. He received a graduate degree from

the University of Michigan, and then he studied at Columbia. But he had a grandson named Martin Hickman. Do you know who Martin Hickman was?

**Gardner:** I don't know who Martin Hickman was.

**Clark:** Martin Hickman was the dean of the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences at BYU for a long time. He was a great dean, revered. He came to BYU in '67, died in '91. He was dean for much of that time. Anyway, another one of the grandsons was a professor at the University of Washington, and he invented something called the Hickman catheter. He was a great teacher and a great physician. You just look at that family, and you can see Lucy Hawes and her commitment to education all the way down the generations. And she got that commitment because of her faith in Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. Learning is important to the Lord.

**Gardner:** How has your education influenced your life? You've had so many opportunities, and so many opportunities to teach. You are talking about how important education is. How has education influenced you, Elder Clark?

**Clark:** In a nutshell, I love school. I have since I was a little boy. I love to read, I love to learn, I love school. And I've never left since I started when I was four or something like that. I've never left. Except for my mission and a few other short periods, I've basically been in school. So the question "How has education affected your life?" is not the right question. Education is my life. It is very, very true actually—I think it is my life. It's what I've done with my life, in addition to being a husband and father to my children, which is an education within itself. I've been greatly blessed. I've had great teachers. And that started when I was just a little boy. I had some really, really great teachers. And I've had teachers who've opened doors for me, and it's been a real blessing. I had the privilege to be educated in some pretty amazing places. And I'm grateful for that. The most powerful education has been through the Holy Ghost, without any doubt. Learning from the Lord has been a great blessing to me. **RE**