INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Four Imperatives for Religious Educators
President Gordon B. Hinckley

Counsel and Correction
Paul V. Johnson

Roles of Support
L. Jill Johnson

Living a Life in Crescendo
Grant C. Anderson

Our Legacy of Religious Education
Stephen K. Iba

Simon and the Woman Who Anointed Jesus’s Feet
Gaye Strathearn

Sorting Out the Seven Marys in the New Testament
Blair G. Van Dyke and Ray L. Huntington

How to Ask Questions That Involve Revelation
Alan R. Maynes

“Written, That Ye Might Believe”:
Literary Features of the Gospels
Julie M. Smith

A Viewpoint on the Supposedly Lost Gospel Q
Thomas A. Wayment

Teacher, Scholar, Administrator:
A Conversation with Robert J. Matthews
Alexander L. Baugh

“You, my beloved associates, need to be constantly drinking from the waters of knowledge and revelation. There is so much to learn and so little time in which to learn it.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley
“The gospel is good news. . . . Be happy! Let that happiness shine through your faces and speak through your testimonies.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

ON THE COVER:
A mountain stream symbolizes Christ’s promise that those who drink of His living water “shall never thirst” (John 4:14).

PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES
The Religious Educator is published two to three times a year by the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 167 Heber J. Grant Building, Provo, UT 84602-2701.

The Religious Educator is designed to serve the interests and needs of those who study and teach the gospel on a regular basis. The distinct focuses of the Religious Educator are on teaching the gospel; publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing the messages of outstanding devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars.

We anticipate that the articles published in the Religious Educator will appeal to anyone interested in perspectives on the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Articles will be selected on the basis of their appeal to and appropriateness for religion professors at each of the Brigham Young University campuses, full-time seminary and institute teachers and administrators, volunteer early-morning and home-study seminary teachers, and volunteer institute of religion teachers. In every issue, we plan a selection of articles that will be helpful and appealing to this diverse audience. In each issue, we hope that each group will find one or more articles that meet the individual needs of members of the group. The beliefs of the respective authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Manuscripts submitted for consideration must be word processed in double-spaced format, including quotations. A minimum of embedded word-processing commands should be used. Authors should follow style conventions of the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition, and the Style Guide for Publications of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 3rd edition, as reflected in a recent issue of the Religious Educator.

At the time an author submits an article for possible publication, the author should submit one copy of the prospective article, an electronic file of the article on an IBM-compatible diskette formatted in Microsoft Word, and photocopies of all source materials cited, arranged in order, numbered to coincide with endnotes, and highlighted to reflect the quotations or paraphrases. Photocopies of source material must include title page and source page with the quotations used highlighted.

Complete author guidelines, including suitable topics, are provided at the Web site for the Religious Educator, tre.byu.edu. Send manuscripts to the Religious Educator, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 167 Heber J. Grant Building, Provo, UT 84602-2701.

Manuscripts received will be checked to see if they conform to style-guide requirements and will undergo a preliminary review. Those manuscripts that meet all criteria will be peer reviewed and will receive a friendly but careful review. Authors will then be notified of the decision about publication.

Subscriptions to the Religious Educator are open to anyone interested in perspectives on the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The subscription rate is $10 per year. Subscribers can place orders on-line at tre.byu.edu (preferred method) or by mail addressed to Creative Works, Brigham Young University, 5/60 HBLL, Provo, UT 84602-6894. Mail subscriptions must include the following information: name, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address (optional; for renewal purposes only), current CES responsibilities, an indication of the number of years of subscription desired (up to three), and a check or money order made out to Creative Works. Subscription questions should be sent via e-mail to catalog@byu.edu and should include “TRE Subscriptions” on the subject line. Back issues are available online only.

ISSN 1536-4720

© 2004 by Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. All rights reserved.
Printed in the U.S.A. on acid-free paper
Editors’ Introduction

Keep on growing. Grow with balance. Let love be your lodestar. These are a few of the positive, inspiring messages President Gordon B. Hinckley provides in “Four Imperatives for Religious Educators.” With his permission, we have reprinted this classic address that offers positive and specific reminders on what matters most.

From the early days of the Church, the Lord has instructed us to seek learning out of the best books. In “Our Legacy of Religious Education,” Stephen K. Iba, assistant administrator in the Church Educational System, offers a montage of scenes from Church history, showing vignettes of teaching settings from Ohio to Salt Lake City that emphasize our commitment to education.

The woman who anointed Jesus’s feet is an enigma. What lessons can we learn from her devotion? In a thoughtful piece, Gaye Strathearn, assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU, draws powerful lessons from this account on love, faith in Christ, and forgiveness.

Seven women in the New Testament are named Mary, so teachers may have difficulty telling them apart. Blair G. Van Dyke, principal at the Highland Utah Lone Peak Seminary, and Ray L. Huntington, associate professor of ancient scripture at BYU, offer insights into each Mary and how each differed in her discipleship.

What power does a good question have in teaching? Certainly the Master Teacher used questions effectively in His teachings, and we also will benefit by following His example. Alan R. Maynes, a CES area director, describes the motivational power of good questions and illustrates how they can invite the spirit of revelation in our lives.

Biblical scholarship and popular media outlets often discuss a lost Gospel called Q. What is this supposedly lost Gospel, and what should religious educators know about it? Thomas A. Wayment, assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU, offers guidance based on current research.

These are a few of the fine articles in this special Church Educational System issue. We want to thank Thomas R. Valletta and Melinda Shaha for their assistance.

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Editor-in-Chief
R. Devan Jensen, Executive Editor
Ted D. Stoddard, Associate Editor
# Table of Contents

1  Four Imperatives for Religious Educators  
   *President Gordon B. Hinckley*

9  Counsel and Correction  
   *Paul V. Johnson*

17 Roles of Support  
   *L. Jill Johnson*

19 Living a Life in Crescendo  
   *Grant C. Anderson*

29 Our Legacy of Religious Education  
   *Stephen K. Iba*

43 Simon and the Woman Who Anointed Jesus’s Feet  
   *Gaye Strathearn*

53 Sorting Out the Seven Marys in the New Testament  
   *Blair G. Van Dyke and Ray L. Huntington*

85 How to Ask Questions That Invite Revelation  
   *Alan R. Maynes*

95 “Written, That Ye Might Believe”: Literary Features of the Gospels  
   *Julie M. Smith*

105 A Viewpoint on the Supposedly Lost Gospel Q  
   *Thomas A. Wayment*

117 Teacher, Scholar, Administrator:  
   A Conversation with Robert J. Matthews  
   *Alexander L. Baugh*

137 New Publications  
   *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*  
   *Prelude to the Restoration: From Apostasy to the Restored Church*  
   *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The New England States*  
   *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless, Second Edition*  
   *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants*  
   *A Mormon Bibliography, 1830–1930, Second Edition*
President Gordon B. Hinckley

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
Four Imperatives for Religious Educators

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Gordon B. Hinckley is President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Reprinted from an address to Church Educational System teachers on September 15, 1978.

It is a pleasure to be with you. I appreciate the kind words which have been said.

It was almost foolish of me to try to be here tonight. I was scolded by the stewardess for trying to get off the plane before it stopped. I have had a long and crowded day. I arose early this morning and dictated these notes. I then hurried to the temple to perform a marriage, rushed to the barber to get my hair clipped, hurried to the airport to fly to Seattle, attended two meetings there, then rushed to the airport, flew back, and I am here. It is too much to put that much into one day, and it is symptomatic of the jostling, busy times in which we live.

You are familiar with this tempo because it is of the nature of your lives also. Your days are filled with the duties of teaching, and your nights are crowded with meetings such as this and many others incident to the responsibilities you carry as active and able members of the Church.

I wish it were not necessary to stand here at a pulpit and speak to a congregation. I wish, rather, that we could sit down together in small groups and talk quietly of problems and hopes and dreams. But that is not feasible, and so I come to these circumstances not to lecture but simply to talk with you insofar as the circumstances will permit. I earnestly pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit, for I desire only one thing, and that is to say something that will be helpful.
I was tempted to talk about your students and the responsibility you have toward them. But before undertaking this task, I read the talks given on past occasions by Elder Boyd K. Packer, President Ezra Taft Benson, and President Spencer W. Kimball. If you will read them again, you will have what you need on these matters and stated better than I would have done. And so I think I would like to talk rather informally about you, as men and women, as husbands and wives, as teachers and administrators, as those among us who, with talents large and small, have been given great responsibility and of whom so much is expected.

First, I wish to congratulate you on the tremendously effective work you are doing. I have now lived long enough to observe three generations of youth in the Church. There can be no doubt that those who have come under your direction are far better educated in the history, the doctrine, and the practices of the Church than any other generation in our history. We are making great progress. It is not always apparent to those involved in the day-to-day programs. But when one stands back and looks across fifty or sixty years, it is obvious and it is gratifying. I have no doubt that the seminary and institute of religion program has had more to do with this than has any other single factor. I commend you warmly for what you have done, and with that commendation I wish to thank you. I know that it has taken great faith and prayers and tremendous effort, but I know also that you must derive sweet satisfaction as you witness those who have been under your tutelage flower into effective missionaries and then go on to become faithful and active members of the Church and strong and able citizens who carry responsibilities of leadership in many parts of the earth.

1. Keep on Growing

And now I should like to speak briefly of four imperatives, if I may call them that. The first, keep on growing. You are all educated people—highly educated. You who are here tonight are graduates of many universities, with bachelor’s, master’s, and doctor’s degrees. One of the great dangers of higher education is what I call “academic burnout.” The earning of a degree is such a grind that once it is earned there is a disposition to say, “I have made it, and now I’ll coast for a season.” The season sometimes becomes a lifetime. I should like to pass on to you these words written by Dr. Joshua Loth Liebman: “The great thing is that as long as we live, we have the privilege of growing. We can learn new skills, engage in new kinds of work, devote ourselves to new causes, make new friends. Accepting, then, the truth that we are capable in some directions and limited in others, that genius is rare, that mediocrity is the portion of most of us, let us remember that we
can and must change ourselves. Until the day of our death we can and must change ourselves. Until the day of our death we can grow, we can tap hidden resources in our makeup.”

None of us, my brethren and sisters, knows enough. The learning process is an endless process. We must read, we must observe, we must assimilate, and we must ponder that to which we expose our minds. I believe in evolution, not organic evolution, as it is called, but in the evolution of the mind, the heart, and the soul of man. I believe in improvement. I believe in growth. I commend to you these marvelous words given by the Lord through revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light growtheth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

I think this is one of the great and stimulating and promising statements in all of our scripture. It sets forth the pathway to perfection through a process of increase of light and understanding of eternal truths. You cannot afford to stop. You must not rest in your development. You are teaching a generation of youth who are hungry for knowledge and even more hungry for inspiration. You, my beloved associates, need to be constantly drinking of the waters of knowledge and revelation. There is so much to learn and so little time in which to learn it. I confess I am constantly appalled by the scarcity of my knowledge, and the one resentment I think I carry concerns the many pressing demands which limit the opportunity for reading. As we talk of reading, I should like to add a word concerning that which we absorb not only out of the processes of the mind, but something further which comes by the power of the Spirit. Remember this promise given by revelation: “God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:26).

Keep on growing, my brothers and sisters, whether you are thirty or whether you are seventy. Your industry in so doing will cause the years to pass faster than you might wish, but they will be filled with a sweet and wonderful zest that will add flavor to your life and power to your teaching. And to all of this you may add the promise that “whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection” (D&C 130:18).

2. Grow with Balance

My second imperative is *grow with balance*. An old cliche states that modern education leads a man to know more and more about less and less. I want to plead with you to keep balance in your lives. Do not become obsessed with what may be called “a gospel hobby.” A good
meal always includes more than one course. You ought to have great strength in your chosen and assigned field of expertise. But I warn you against making that your only interest. I glory in the breadth of this commandment to the people of the Church:

And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

That ye may be prepared in all things. (D&C 88:77–80)

In my life I have had opportunity to serve in many different capacities in the Church. Every time I was released in connection with a new calling, I felt reluctant to leave the old. But every call brought with it an opportunity to learn of another segment of the great program of the Church. I carry in my heart something of pity for those who permit themselves to get locked into one situation and never have an opportunity to experience any other. Missionaries not infrequently plead with their presidents that they be able to extend their missions. This is commendable and is usually indicative of the fact that they have been effective in their work. But a missionary’s release usually is as providential as his call, as thereby there is opened to him other opportunities. And out of it all will come a balance in his life.

And beyond the Church there are other experiences to be had in other fields. There is so much work to be done in the communities in which we live. We are urged as citizens to make our contributions through participation in the processes of government. If we are to preserve in our communities those qualities which we so greatly cherish, we must become involved and expend time and effort in that labor. We can develop strength and gain much of experience in so doing while assisting with the pressing social problems that confront our society. We also need to know something about the world of business and science and mechanics in which we live.

It is imperative that we as teachers in the seminary and institute of religion program of the Church read constantly the scriptures and other books related directly to the history, the doctrine, and the practices
of the Church. But we ought also to be reading secular history, the
great literature that has survived the ages, and the writings of contem-
porary thinkers and doers. In so doing we will find inspiration to pass
on to our students who will need all the balanced strength they can get
as they face the world into which they move.

Brethren and sisters, grow in the knowledge of the eternal truths
which you are called to teach, and grow in understanding of the great
and good men and women who have walked the earth and of the mar-
velous phenomena with which we are surrounded in the world in which
we live. Now and then as I have watched a man become obsessed with
a narrow segment of knowledge, I have worried about him. I have seen
a few such. They have pursued relentlessly only a sliver of knowledge
until they have lost a sense of balance. At the moment I think of two
who went so far and became so misguided in their narrow pursuits that
they who once had been effective teachers of youth have been found to
be in apostasy and have been excommunicated from the Church. Keep
your interests range over many good fields while working with growing
strength in the field of your own profession.

3. Let Love Be Your Lodestar

Third, let love be your lodestar. It is the greatest force on earth. Love
is a word of many meanings, and all of these apply to you. Cultivate
love for the subjects you teach. There is a central figure in all of these,
and that figure is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.
Teach of Him. Bear testimony of Him out of a deep and earnest con-
viction so that your students will feel the strength of your testimony.
Let me read a few words from a letter I received from a missionary who
had been in the mission field less than three months:

I arrived in the mission field, and my love for my family, girlfriend,
and home caused me great homesickness, and my feeling of home-
sickness brought me within inches of returning home. My mission
president, with unbelievable love, held me here long enough to have
me attend a very special missionary meeting with [one of the General
Authorities] who was visiting our mission. He took us through an exer-
cise with the scriptures in which we came to know our Redeemer, Jesus
Christ. At the end of the meeting, we all stood and sang “I Am a Child
of God” and then “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” As the second
song began, I found myself unable to sing. At that time I had the most
spiritual experience of my life thus far. Through the entire song I just
stood there, visualizing the Savior in my mind, and tears streamed down
my face. At that very time I came to the unshakable knowledge that
Jesus is the Christ and that He atoned for my sins.
I think such an experience is the privilege and opportunity and responsibility of every young man and woman in this Church. It is conviction of this kind that expressed itself in a great and powerful love that has been the root of the success of our missionary work, as everyone who has been in that work could testify. It has been said that more true love for the Lord has been caught than has been taught.

I recall hearing in England in a stake conference the testimony of an extremely able young man who had recently joined the Church. He said, “I was trained as a chartered accountant, trained to look for flaws in all that I examined. Because of my critical nature and training, the missionary lessons turned me off. But a good man who was a member, a man of limited education but great faith, talked quietly with me about what the gospel meant to him. He spoke out of a great spirit of love. And somehow that touched my heart, and I am here tonight speaking to you because of it.”

I hope that you will cultivate in your hearts not only a love for the Savior of whom you bear testimony, but also a deep love for those you teach and particularly for those who appear to be so difficult to reach. They need you most, and the miracle that will come into their lives as you labor with them in a spirit of encouragement and kindness will bring gladness and satisfaction to you all of your days and strength and faith and testimony to them. Never forget the statement of the Lord concerning the sinner who repented. Read frequently that marvelously beautiful and touching parable of the prodigal son that is set forth in the fifteenth chapter of Luke.

Further, cultivate a spirit of love for your family. We all say we have it. Maybe we do. Hopefully we do. But I should like to remind you that it constantly needs refreshing. Husbands, look for the beauty in your wives. Wives, uphold and sustain and cherish your husbands; and parents, love your children with a great and evident affection. Unless there is love in the home, the work in the classroom will become only an exercise.

4. Enjoy Your Work

And now, finally, enjoy your work. Be happy. I meet so many people who constantly complain about the burden of their responsibilities. Of course the pressures are great. There is much, too much, to do. There are financial burdens to add to all of these pressures, and with all of this are prone to complain, frequently at home, often in public. Turn your thinking around. The gospel is good news. Man is that he might have joy. Be happy! Let that happiness shine through your faces and speak through your testimonies. You can expect problems. There may
be occasional tragedies. But shining through all of this is the plea of the Lord: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

I enjoy these words of Jenkin Lloyd Jones, which I clipped from a column in the Deseret News some years ago. I pass them on to you as I conclude my remarks. Said he:

Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he’s been robbed.

Most putts don’t drop. Most beef is tough. Most children grow up to be just people. Most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration. Most jobs are more often dull than otherwise.

Life is like an old-time rail journey—delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride.

I repeat, my brothers and sisters, the trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride; and really, isn’t it a wonderful ride? Enjoy it! Laugh about it! Sing about it! Remember the words of the writer of Proverbs:

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).

God bless you, my beloved associates, in this great and sacred work. May you grow in strength and power and capacity and understanding with each passing day. May you cultivate constantly a saving balance in your life. May you speak from hearts filled with love for the Lord, for His children, for your own dear ones. And may there be gladness in your hearts as you reflect on the marvelous kindness of the Lord to you and upon your great and sacred opportunity to touch for everlasting good those who daily come under your direction.

God bless each of you that there may be love and peace in your homes, and in your hearts that satisfaction which comes of work well done in so great a cause, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

In 1990, Elder Boyd K. Packer reminded teachers to learn from correction offered in a spirit of love.
Counsel and Correction

Paul V. Johnson

Paul V. Johnson is Church Educational System administrator—Religious Education and Elementary and Secondary Education.

This address was given at a CES satellite training broadcast on August 4, 2004.

It is a marvelous privilege to be with you today. Because of technology, we are able to gather in many places in the world. We are from different backgrounds and cultures. We speak different languages and live in different countries, but we are all united in a great common cause—helping the youth and young adults of the Church learn the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have about two thousand full-time employees worldwide focused on seminaries and institutes of religion. It is a large organization, but compared with the numbers of young people in the kingdom, it is a relatively small number. Compared with the total population of the earth of over six billion, we are a very small group indeed. And yet this small group can make a great difference in the lives of the young people we work with. In fact, if we accomplish what we have been asked, our work will impact much more than just the young people we work with today. Because of the rising generation’s opportunities and destiny, your influence will have an effect on the entire world. These young people will be prepared for their future, and it is exciting to be participants in that preparation.

I would like to mention three important things that will help us be even better as we go forward in our work: first, a continued focus on the current teaching emphasis; second, personal accountability for our assignments and our individual growth; and third, a willingness to receive help and correction.
Focus on the Current Teaching Emphasis

I have had the chance to meet with some of you since the introduction of our teaching emphasis last year. It is apparent that you have put a lot of effort into making changes in your teaching to reflect the direction of this emphasis. We can see some of the fruits of this emphasis during a year of teaching, but the greatest blessings will be seen further in the future when our students are in the mission field or have their own families and are grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We sincerely hope you will continue to put forth efforts in this area. It may require further changes in how you teach. We also hope you are willing to share ideas with us that have made a difference in your classroom. We have created an authorized means whereby good ideas can be shared with fellow teachers in the Church Educational System. Would you please send good ideas to us? You can e-mail them to our Training Services Division at ideas@ldsces.org or through our Web site at ldsces.org.

Personal Accountability

The doctrines of the gospel are straightforward on accountability. Because we have both agency and a knowledge of good and evil, we are personally accountable for our choices and will be judged according to the choices we make, including our words, our works, and our thoughts (see Alma 12:14).

In our employment we are also accountable for the choices we make regarding our particular assignments. If we can each sense this accountability, we will be more focused on finding ways to accomplish what we have been asked to accomplish. We will also be more willing to make the personal changes needed to be more effective in our particular assignment. We will also be more open to suggestions and correction.

Willingness to Receive Help and Correction

I would like to discuss willingness to receive help and correction. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught some powerful principles on this topic in a talk he gave in 1990 entitled “The Edge of the Light.” Look for these principles as he tells an experience he had as a young married man with the patriarch of his stake:

Shortly after we were married, I was invited to speak in a sacrament meeting. Patriarch [S. Norman] Lee was seated on the stand. As the meeting closed he said to me, “That was a fine talk, Brother Packer, but
may I point out that the correct pronunciation of this one word is as follows . . .” to which I replied with some impudence, “Oh, is that so?”

Later I felt very ashamed of myself and called Patriarch Lee and apologized. I thanked him for the correction and invited his continued interest. . . .

Shortly thereafter I was called to the stake high council and on fairly frequent occasions spoke in meetings where Patriarch Lee was in attendance. Always he would compliment me and then add a correction or a suggestion. Always I tried to respond with sufficient appreciation to encourage him to continue his interest.

A desire to learn is one thing. An expressed willingness to be taught and to be corrected is quite another. I have found . . . that there is always a “Patriarch Lee-type”—usually someone older and experienced who knows much about the challenges you face. . . . It is worth inviting them to help you.

Elder Packer continues:

While there is great value in seeking a personal interview to receive counsel, what I am talking about is something else. It is an unstructured process, with counsel and suggestions offered in bits and pieces and you responding with thanks. That process survives only where there is a genuine desire to learn and an invitation to those who can teach and correct you.

That invitation is not always in words but more in attitude. . . .

Once when I returned from a mission tour totally exhausted, my wife said to me, “I have never seen you so tired. What is the matter; did you find a mission president who wouldn’t listen?” “No,” I replied, “it was just the opposite. I found one who wanted to learn.” Many will say they want to learn but feel threatened if there is the slightest element of correction in what they are given. He wanted to learn! That president now sits in the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

I have learned that few respond when that kind of teaching or correction is offered and fewer still invite it. If you are willing, a teacher will spread a cloth and share nourishing morsels from his store of experience.¹

Elder Packer mentioned that “many will say they want to learn but feel threatened if there is the slightest element of correction in what they are given.” Why does this seem to be a natural tendency? It may be because of our own personal pride and ego. It is an irony that we want to be viewed by others as competent and even flawless but can be resistant to suggestions that would help us get closer to that ideal. It’s almost as if we are willing to trade long-term growth for short-term appearances.
I had an experience involving two employees who I felt needed to correct something that had to do with their employment. It was the same issue with both employees, but their responses were very different. I talked with each employee. The first was somewhat defensive and tried to push the blame to others in an attempt to relieve himself of accountability for his actions. He seemed more interested in rationalizing than listening. There was also some sulking afterward and for a while a little strain in our relationship.

The other employee reacted differently. His first expression was an apology that he had put me in a spot where I had to come to him and correct him. He said that he should have made the change before it got to that point and that he would try to not put me in that uncomfortable situation again. He meant what he said. He immediately accepted the counsel and made the changes. Our relationship was strengthened, and I have always felt the door was open with him for very open communication.

Remember Elder Packer explained that he was talking about an unstructured process that survives only when there is a genuine desire to learn. It is also triggered by attitude as much as anything else. We can actually shut the process down if we become defensive or start to murmur or ignore the counsel we receive. I have had the privilege of receiving correction and suggestions from several General Authorities. I know I need to be careful not to close the door for them to give further feedback by becoming defensive or not listening to what they are trying to tell me.

Allow me to read an experience one of our employees had with his area director. Notice how he responds to his area director and the difference it makes in his own teaching and in his life:

I entered my CES career with high expectations. . . . My greatest hope was that I would be an influence in the lives of students and bring people closer to the Lord. I had a talent for teaching. I also had a great love for the youth. However, as my career began, I was not having the effect that I had hoped for. . . .

As my career entered its fifth year, I felt satisfied. I had become good at getting by. I believed that as long as I tried and did my best the Lord would work out the details in my students’ lives. At this point, I had been given very little feedback as to how I was doing. Most of my discussions with other teachers led to the conclusion that “we all need to hang in there and do the best we can.”

Then a new area director was assigned. He brought a new and different direction. When he first visited my class, instead of patting me
on the back and saying thanks for all you do, he made the comment, “You are a good teacher, but you are not a great one; with a few simple changes you could become a great one.” I was stunned. Since preservice, I had not been given any direct feedback or instruction on how I could improve my teaching. I could have been offended; however, I was intrigued by what he meant by the statement that I could become a great teacher.

My area director and I talked. He explained to me the areas . . . where I could improve. He visited my classroom often, and each time I would take his counsel and try my best to apply it.

I am so grateful for an area director who took the time to make gentle, yet bold comments about how I could improve my teaching. . . . I am grateful for that day five years ago when [he] visited my class for the first time and set my career on a different course and changed the impact I was having in the lives of my students.

Did you notice his reaction to the correction he received? Think of what progress we each could make with that type of attitude and commitment.

In his last conference address, Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught us to “be grateful for people in your lives who love you enough to correct you, to remind you of your standards and possibilities, even when you don’t want to be reminded.

“A dear and now deceased friend said to me years ago when I had said something sardonic, ‘You could have gone all day without saying that.’ His one-liner reproof was lovingly stated, illustrating how correction can be an act of affection.”

I have a three-year-old grandson named James. My daughter had been teaching him to be careful about strangers. She was quizzing him to see how well he had listened to her and asked him, “James, would you ever get into a car with a stranger?” He answered, “No.” She continued, “What if the stranger said he would give you candy? Then would you go with him?” James thought for a minute and finally said, “I’m not telling.” My daughter became a little alarmed and said, “James, you never go with a stranger even if he has candy. It is very dangerous!” James then said, “Don’t talk to me, Mommy!” Sometimes we can be a little like James when we are given correction and we just don’t want to hear it.

We can each do better in this particular area in our lives. We can be more open and less defensive. We can make it easy for others to give us suggestions and be truly grateful for the help. It is not a sign of weakness or incompetence. In fact, defensiveness and unwillingness to take correction or even chastisement is a sign of weakness.
We will be blessed by being open to counsel from our leaders and others around us. If we are willing and invite help, that counsel will come. The *Administering Appropriately* handbook states: “Seeking help from others and reporting to leaders are essential in personal development. . . . Leaders and teachers should . . . take initiative in seeking help by pursuing counsel, training, and feedback.”

Most importantly, we each have access to a powerful source of correction and counsel—the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost works on some of the same principles we have discussed. The Savior taught, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26).

If we are defensive and ignore promptings from the Spirit, we become less able to receive further counsel. If we are open and willing to change and follow the Spirit, we become more familiar with the whisperings and can have the Spirit as a constant companion.

Elder Maxwell said: “As the Lord communicates with the meek and submissive, fewer decibels are required, and more nuances are received. Even the most meek, like Moses, learn overwhelming things they ‘never had supposed.’ But it is only the meek mind which can be so shown and so stretched—not those, as Isaiah wrote, who ‘are wise in their own eyes.’”

**Appreciation**

At the beginning, I mentioned the great privilege it is to work with the rising generation. I feel that very strongly. I know you feel it too. I have sensed that as I have visited you and watched you interact with these great young people. We can help make a difference if we are willing. The Lord expects us to. I think you have felt the same feelings as the Brethren have addressed us. They know we have to be more effective in our assignments, and they expect us to be.

I am very thankful for you. I want to express my appreciation to the spouses of our employees. Your support and help is so important. I know this in a very personal way. I am so grateful for my wife, Jill. I wish you could get to know her better. I wish we could get to know each of you better. We pray for you and your families.

I know that God lives. I also know that Jesus Christ is His divine Son. I know that He carried out the Atonement and is a resurrected being. I testify of that Atonement. There may be no more powerful influence in the life of a young person than the sure knowledge that Christ has atoned for his or her sins. This can help them weather any
storms of temptation or persecution they may face. The fulness of the gospel has been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I know we have a prophet of God at the head of the Church today—President Gordon B. Hinckley. I love you and pray the Lord’s blessings will be with you.

Notes

Teachers can influence their students not only by what they say but also by how they live.

Photo by Matthew Reier
Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
Roles of Support

_L. Jill Johnson_

_L. Jill Johnson_ is the wife of Paul V. Johnson, Church Educational System administrator.

This address was given at a CES satellite training broadcast on August 4, 2004.

I am grateful for this opportunity to thank all of the people who labor in this educational program of the Church—so thankful for my association with you. I hope you feel how your lives of righteousness are needed by the youth of the Church in these latter days. Clever lessons or media production, though important, will never be a substitute for a life of righteousness lived by a teacher who truly loves our Heavenly Father and His Son and those entrusted to their care.

We are directed in this work by living prophets. These men place great trust in us to represent our Savior, Jesus Christ, who directs them. Through them we receive instructions for holding up the light of His gospel to the great army of young people who will be in seminary and institute classrooms all across the world. I am aware that as I speak to you, many of you will be in the front of those classes, but many more of us will be the support system for those who teach. For those employed teachers, as students sit in your classes and as the Spirit teaches them, they learn. But they will also observe your lives. They will notice how the gospel makes you loving, happy, and interested in them. They will notice how much you love your family. Seeing the love and respect you feel for your family will make impressions that can give them hope for the future and a faith in His promises to them that obedience brings forth the blessings of heaven. For those of this group who are not as visible to the students, we can still be a great blessing to
them. As we live righteously, the Holy Ghost can guide us in our roles of support for those who teach, and we will be an influence for good in our families and neighborhoods. The challenge for all of us is to conform with exactness and honor to those teachings we have received from God through His authorized servants, to keep our lives pure, and to strive for freedom from earth stains so that we can have the presence of the Holy Ghost to guide us in each decision.

In the night sky there are many lights. Some of these points of lights are dim, others are brighter, and others are brighter still. The challenge is to be the guiding lights to the youth of the Church, leading them to the greater light of our Lord and Savior. Our love for Him will empower us to represent Him. As the ancient prophet Abinadi declared in the book of Mosiah, “He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death” (Mosiah 16:9).

Let us, therefore, do as all the prophets ancient and modern have taught us. Our choices to follow them will be the power source of our light in a world of gathering darkness. The power in the Savior’s Atonement can make up for our own imperfections and inabilities. But that help can only come as we truly seek, ask, and give up our selfish desires as a sacrifice is given up upon an altar.

We were recently in one of the Church’s visitors’ centers, and the missionary there asked us to envision what this world would be like now if a teenaged boy had not gone into a grove of trees to pray. What if he had not been taught from the Bible in his youth? What will our world be like in another two hundred years if our youth are not taught from the holy scriptures, if they are not taught to pray with a sincere heart and real intent? As Abinadi concluded his teachings, he declared, “Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father” (Mosiah 16:15).

This is His Church, and we will receive power to feed His lambs only as we make choices to follow Him and leave all worldly enticements behind. We can be a light to the youth in these latter days as we follow His teachings, trying to love as He loves and keeping our eye on His chosen servants in these latter days.

I bear my testimony that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is His Church and that we are led by men who are called by Him to give us instruction for our day. We will be blessed to accomplish the work given us only as we are obedient and humbly follow Him. "
Living a Life in Crescendo

Grant C. Anderson is assistant administrator in the Church Educational System.

This address was given at a CES satellite training broadcast on August 4, 2004.

A couple of months ago, my wife and I attended a concert that featured the orchestra from the high school in our community. Under the direction of a very dedicated and able music teacher, more than one hundred young people combined their talents to produce a program filled with beautiful and inspiring music.

I am not a musician, but I was captivated that night not only by the music itself but also by the very process used to create that music. I cannot read the unique written language of music, so I was fascinated by these young musicians who could. Each one of them took a score of written music, translated the symbols on the page into sound by skillful action on his or her instrument, and wove together those sounds that, in ways I don’t entirely understand, evoked feelings and emotions within me.

I have asked those who can read music to explain to me what the written symbols mean. One of those symbols, I have learned, is called the “crescendo.” The word comes from Latin and means “to grow or increase.” This symbol tells the musician that the volume of the music is to be increased.

I mention all of the foregoing as a preface to a statement that I would like to use today as the central message of my remarks. Using the crescendo as a metaphor, Elder Neal A. Maxwell said in a general conference address, “In case you hadn’t noticed it, in the last days, discipleship
is to be lived in crescendo.”¹ And that is the essence of my message today:
as disciples of Jesus Christ, our lives should be lived “in crescendo.”

But what does that mean? It obviously has nothing to do with
getting louder as you get older. I offer as one possible answer a sen-
tence from our Administering Appropriately handbook: “As individuals
come unto Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, they become more
like the Savior in knowledge, performance, attitude, and character.”²

I would like to emphasize two things from that statement. First,
becoming like Christ is the ultimate aim of living a life in crescendo.
Second, that statement identifies four specific areas where each of us
should be experiencing crescendo or growth. Those four areas are
knowledge, performance, attitude, and character.

The scriptures teach that the Savior Himself, as our exemplar, lived
a life in crescendo. The scriptures record that “Jesus increased in wis-
dom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52) until
He eventually “received a fulness” (D&C 93:13). Speaking of Christ,
President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “You will find your greatest exam-
ple in the Son of God. . . . He was the great paragon of righteousness,
the only perfect man ever to walk the earth. His was the wondrous
example toward whom each of us might point our lives in our eternal
quest for excellence.”³

Another example, according to Elder B. H. Roberts, was the
Prophet Joseph Smith. Please note that the things Elder Roberts iden-
tified as evidence that the Prophet lived a life in crescendo center on
these areas of knowledge, performance, attitude, and character.

Elder Roberts wrote: “He lived his life, as I have said elsewhere, in
crescendo, it grew in intensity and volume as he approached its close.
Higher and still higher the inspiration of God directed his thoughts;
bolder were his conceptions, and clearer his expositions of them. . . .
He grew stronger with each passing day; more impressive in weight of
personal character, and charm of manner.”⁴

We are assembled in various locations today not only as disciples of
Jesus Christ but also in the common interest that we share as employ-
ees and spouses in the Church Educational System. As such, I would
like to apply Elder Maxwell’s statement to our particular circumstances.
Not only should our lives as disciples be lived in crescendo but also, as
religious educators and spouses in CES, we should live careers this way.
And what does that mean?

I know what it does not mean. It does not mean we climb through
what some may perceive as a hierarchy of CES positions. It does not
mean that over time we advance from small, unseen assignments to
large, visible venues. And it has nothing to do with growing name recognition. In fact, it may very well be that the only ones who truly know whether you are living a career in crescendo are you and Heavenly Father. Because so many changes in assignments and administrators occur in the course of a thirty- or forty-year career, chances are that no one else will see the growth that gradually takes place in an employee. So what does it mean to live a career in crescendo? The statement from the *Administering Appropriately* handbook that was referred to earlier applies here as well.

First and foremost for us as religious educators, Christ is the ultimate and perfect standard by which we measure ourselves. Our objective is to become a teacher like Him. As professional educators, we should be good at what we do. I am sorry to say that I have, on more than one occasion, been guilty of pride because of my position as a professional teacher in the Church. For me, the antidote to that pride has always been to compare my teaching efforts to the Savior’s. When I have done so, my pride has quickly vanished. His example as a teacher humbles me and reminds me that the sacred privilege of being called a teacher requires far more than employment in CES. Speaking of Christ as our standard, Elder Maxwell said, “He rejoices in our genuine goodness and achievement, but any assessment of where we stand in relation to Him tells us that we do not stand at all! We kneel!”

As mentioned earlier, the statement from the *Administering Appropriately* handbook refers to four specific areas in which I should be growing as a religious educator. Once again, those areas are knowledge, performance, attitude, and character. With those four principles or areas in mind, we should, in private self-evaluation, regularly ask ourselves if our knowledge and wisdom are increasing through study and righteous living. Is my performance as a teacher and as an administrator improving? Is my attitude more Christlike than it has been in the past? Is my character becoming more and more like Christ’s?

Now having said all this, I am sure that not one of us would disagree with Elder Maxwell’s declaration that we live our lives in crescendo. But giving assent to the idea is, of course, far easier than actually doing it. We all face inclinations and tendencies that stand as obstacles between us and a Christlike life. One of the most difficult obstacles to our growth is recognizing and accepting the need to change—and accepting the pain that often accompanies change. Elder Richard G. Scott said, “To get from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain.”
It is a temptation in life, and even in a CES career, to find a place where we are comfortable and content. Familiar surroundings, people, tasks, and routines can offer a sense of security and, if we are not careful, can insulate us against change, growth, and diligence. The prophet Nephi warned, “Wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!” (2 Nephi 28:24). And why is that so? In a general conference address, Elder Russell C. Taylor, a former member of the Seventy, said, “Progress is not created by contented people.” The message seems very clear: being too comfortable, too contented, and too unwilling to accept change—and the pain associated with it—can keep us from living a life in crescendo.

I have encountered another obstacle that has kept me from living my life in crescendo. When presented with a new idea, procedure, methodology, or emphasis, I have caught myself saying something like this: “I have worked hard at trying to be a good teacher and have spent years honing my skills, and what I do in the classroom seems to work. What’s being proposed or asked of me does not fit my teaching style nor my personality. Why would I tamper with or try to fix something that isn’t broken?”

The fallacy of that kind of thinking is exposed by a principle taught by our commissioner of education, Elder Henry B. Eyring. He said:

Years ago, one of the things we taught people we met as missionaries was that they could either progress or fall back spiritually. We told them it was dangerous to think they could stand still. I remember feeling it was true, and yet I wondered why it was so.

Time has taught me. As the forces around us increase in intensity, whatever spiritual strength was once sufficient will not be enough. And whatever growth in spiritual strength we once thought was possible, greater growth will be made available to us. Both the need for spiritual strength and the opportunity to acquire it will increase at rates which we underestimate at our peril.

If I understand correctly, the principle that Elder Eyring was teaching was that which worked in the past will not be sufficient for what we face today. I believe that applies to our teaching as well.

That principle is illustrated in the war chapters of the Book of Mormon, as many of you know and have taught. At one point the Nephites went to battle, having dressed themselves in armor. The approaching enemy had no armor. The account says that these enemies “were exceedingly afraid of the armies of the Nephites because of their armor, notwithstanding their number being so much greater than the Nephites” (Alma 43:21). Not to be outdone, at a future battle this
enemy dressed itself in armor. Captain Moroni anticipated this; he knew that the armor of a previous battle would not suffice for the current conflict. Moroni implemented new strategies and defenses, and as the armored enemy approached, they were astonished to see the Nephites had fortified their cities. The account says: “To their uttermost astonishment, they were prepared for them, in a manner which never had been known among the children of Lehi. . . . [They] were exceedingly astonished at their manner of preparation for war” (Alma 49:8–9).

What we did ten years ago as teachers or as parents to provide adequate armor for our young people may not be sufficient for the battles they are facing today. To be unwilling to change what we do could put our children and students at risk. Elder Marvin J. Ashton, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, once said, “The recognition of the need to change has to be a greater force than the luxury of staying the same.” As parents, as teachers, as workers in the kingdom of God in any capacity, we cannot afford “the luxury of staying the same” if we truly want to help our young people survive their battles.

There is yet another significant obstacle that can keep us from growing as we should, both as disciples and as religious educators. I have wrestled with this one for most of my personal and professional life. I have on occasion recognized the need to change something in my life but, more times than not, have hindered the whole process because I wanted the changes to take place my way or in a way I thought best suited me. The Lord has repeatedly used processes to change me that I haven’t liked. And what’s more, He has changed things in and about me that I wished He would have left alone.

The Christian apologist C. S. Lewis wrote:

> When I was a child I often had toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother she would give me something which would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother—at least, not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this. I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from pain: but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists: I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. . . .

Now, if I may put it that way, Our Lord is like the dentists. . . . Dozens of people go to Him to be cured of some one particular sin which they are ashamed of . . . or which is obviously spoiling daily life. . . . Well,
He will cure it all right: but He will not stop there. That may be all you asked; but if once you call Him in, He will give you the full treatment.\footnote{0}

So what can we do to better pursue living a life in crescendo? Our \textit{Administering Appropriately} handbook devotes an entire chapter to this topic. It is entitled “Develop Divine Potential and Promote Professional Growth” (pages 15–17). I would like to recommend, as a start, that each of us, whether employee or spouse, read or reread this section. As you do so, prayerfully seek inspiration to determine what it is you can do to move forward in your development and growth. I firmly believe that if we are sincere in our asking, the Lord will manifest to each of us how we can further develop our knowledge, performance, attitude, and character.

That chapter in \textit{Administering Appropriately} stresses three important principles: first, that each of us is accountable for our own growth; second, that we should seek help from others in our efforts to grow; and third, that we should report our progress. I would recommend that once you have prayerfully read that chapter, you share your insights and goals with those who can help you implement them: a spouse, a mentor, or a CES colleague or supervisor. The handbook states, “Although CES leaders should regularly provide assistance, leaders and teachers should also take initiative in seeking help by pursuing counsel, training, and feedback.”\footnote{11}

Like many others of a certain gender, I often stubbornly avoid asking for directions or guidance, either while traveling on the road or while looking for something in a store. I don’t know if it is pride or some spirit of conquest, but I have wasted a lot of time and energy by not asking for help, and my wife no longer finds this trait amusing. While my stubborn wanderings in a store may not have eternal consequences, such an attitude in other parts of my life could. The scriptures tell us that many snake-bitten Israelites gave up their lives because they wouldn’t even look at the help that was offered (see Numbers 21:5–9; 1 Nephi 17:41; Alma 33:19–20). I wonder how many times I have suffered unnecessarily because I was too stubborn to ask for assistance.

With so much at stake in the lives of those we lead and teach, we do not have the luxury of wasting time and energy by stubbornly refusing to seek counsel and feedback from others. We need help, and we need to ask for it. And greater blessings will be ours if we voluntarily seek out that help rather than having administrators or supervisors mandate it or develop a program to help us do it.

I would like to offer four final thoughts or observations about change and growth.
**There will be flat periods in life; use them well.** First, having counseled us to live in crescendo, Elder Maxwell offered a caution; there will, of necessity, need to be some pauses in our ascent. He taught:

The seeming flat periods of life give us a blessed chance to reflect upon what is past as well as to be readied for some rather stirring climbs ahead. Patience helps us to use, rather than to protest, these seeming flat periods of life, becoming filled with quiet wonder over the past and with anticipation for that which may lie ahead. Instead of grumbling or murmuring, we should be consolidating and reflecting, which would simply not happen if life were an uninterrupted sequence of fantastic scenery, confrontive events, or exhilarating conversation.

We should savor even the seemingly ordinary times, for life cannot be made up of all kettledrums and crashing cymbals. There must be some flutes and violins. Living cannot be all crescendo; there must be some counterpoint.¹²

**Don’t be discouraged as you seek for excellence.** My second observation comes from comments made by President Hinckley at a BYU devotional. You will notice that twice he makes reference to finding happiness in the quest for excellence even if we don’t experience all the growth we had hoped for. He said:

We will not become perfect in a day or a month or a year. We will not accomplish it in a lifetime, but we can begin now, starting with our more obvious weaknesses and gradually converting them to strengths as we go forward with our lives.

All of us cannot be geniuses, but we can strive for excellence. . . .

The excellence of which you dream may not be attainable in its entirety. But there will be progress as you try. There will be growth. There will be improvement. And there will be much of added happiness. . . .

. . . Reach for the stars. If you touch them, great shall be your reward. If you stumble and fall while reaching upward, you will be happy knowing you have made the effort.¹⁴

**Look for small changes in things we do often.** My third observation comes from counsel that was given to us several years ago by Elder Eyring at our annual “Evening with a General Authority.” He spoke of self-improvement and change and how we can best achieve it. He said, “Most of us have had some experience with self-improvement efforts. My experience has taught me this about how people and organizations improve: the best place to look is for small changes we could make in things we do often. There is power in steadiness and repetition. And if
we can be led by inspiration to choose the right small things to change, consistent obedience will bring great improvement.”

Be willing to accept new assignments. And finally, my fourth observation. As I have looked back over my own life and tried to identify the influences that have helped me to grow and change, I trace back many of my best growth periods to a common catalyst: a request by CES to take a new assignment. Those changes have never been easy, and they were often at times that didn’t seem ideal or to places that I didn’t even know existed. But the Lord knew that each one was a perfect fit for me and my family.

I am not suggesting that the only way to grow is to frequently change assignments. There may, in fact, be times when a change wouldn’t be the right thing to do. What I am suggesting is this: When an invitation comes from CES to take a new assignment, consider it very prayerfully, and don’t let comfort or the fear of change drive your decision.

Now, in closing I would like to read the counsel given by President Spencer W. Kimball at the conclusion of the April 1979 general conference. It seems very appropriate for what I have tried to say today. He said: “Let us not shrink from the next steps in our spiritual growth, brothers and sisters, by holding back, or side-stepping our fresh opportunities for service to our families and our fellowmen. Let us trust the Lord and take the next steps in our individual lives. He has promised us that he will be our tender tutor, measuring what we are ready for. . . . He will not ask us to bear more than we can bear nor thrust upon us that for which we are not yet ready. But likewise, we must not tarry too long when we are ready to move on.”

I have received my own witness that this is the Lord’s Church. I know that. I also know that the Church Educational System is His as well. His hand is in this work, both globally and locally. May we live with gratitude for the sacred privilege of being instruments that His hands might use. And may we live our lives in crescendo so that, as we sing in one of our hymns, “more used would I be.”

Notes


4. B. H. Roberts, introduction to The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of


11. Administering Appropriately, 16.


In 1888 Karl G. Maeser was appointed as superintendent of the Church’s General Board of Education.

Photo by Thomas E. Daniels
Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
Our Legacy of Religious Education

Stephen K. Iba

*Stephen K. Iba is an assistant administrator in the Church Educational System.*

*From a talk given at the CES Area Directors Convention, September 27, 1997.*

Some have suggested that one cannot appreciate the present without an understanding of the past. Our educational legacy provides the precedent and context by which we act in the present and plan for the future. We are compelled to feel, as our predecessors felt, that we have not yet arrived in our pursuit of excellence as educators. A nineteenth-century teacher expressed it this way: “I see the apocalyptic gate swing open, and far down the aisles of the future brightly revealed in the soft clear light, there stands the incarnate ideal of the *coming* teacher.”

I will attempt to present in short, sequential snapshots a look at the remarkable coming we share as colleagues in the Church Educational System. To the twenty-seven-year-old Joseph Smith, the Lord admonished, “I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. . . . Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you” (D&C 88:77–78).

**Early Efforts in Education**

The Lord’s command and promise were received with enthusiasm and high expectations by the youthful prophet and his associates. Schools were established in Ohio and Missouri for training the early elders.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was an eager and exceptional student, as characterized by his study in the Kirtland Hebrew School under the
mentorship of Joshua Seixas, a Jewish professor. During this initial twelve-week language schooling experience, the Prophet noted several events:

“In the evening, President Cowdery returned from New York, bringing with him a quantity of Hebrew books, for the benefit of the school. He presented me with a Hebrew Bible, Lexicon, and Grammar, also a Greek Lexicon, and Webster’s English Dictionary . . . . Spent the day at home, in examining my books, and studying the Hebrew alphabet.”

“Attended the Hebrew School, divided it into classes. Had some debate with Elder Orson Pratt concerning the pronunciation of a Hebrew letter. He manifested a stubborn spirit, at which I was much grieved.”

“My soul delights in reading the word of the Lord in the original, and I am determined to pursue the study of the languages, until I shall become master of them, if I am permitted to live long enough.”

“At evening went down to the Professor’s room to be instructed by him in the language. On account of the storm the class did not meet.”

“O may God give me learning, even language; and endure me with qualifications to magnify His name while I live.”

For Joseph all learning had one transcendent purpose: “Obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion, Amen” (D&C 93:53; emphasis added).

In Kirtland the Lord directed William W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery, a printer and a teacher, respectively, to “do the work of printing, and of selecting and writing books for schools in this church, that little children also may receive instruction before me as is pleasing unto me” (D&C 55:4). A teacher reported to the board of trustees in Kirtland: “Since the year 1827, I have taught school in five different states, and visited many schools in which I have engaged as teacher; in none, I can say with certainty, have I seen students make more rapid progress, William E. McLellin, teacher.”

In a similar vein, Sidney Rigdon stated in the Far West Record in 1838, “Next to the worship of our God we esteem the education of our children and the rising generation.”

Education in Nauvoo

A university charter for the City of Nauvoo was granted in 1840. The first mayor, Dr. John C. Bennett, was the principal player in securing the charter and was selected as chancellor. Orson Spencer, Sidney Rigdon, and Orson Pratt were titled professors and department chairmen. Professor Pratt advertised in the Nauvoo Wasp his course offerings for the upcoming quarter:
The Wasp

September 24, 1842

Orson Pratt

Professor mathematics and English literature in the University of Nauvoo

Tuition per quarter:

For reading and history ................................................ $2.50

Geography, Grammar and Arithmetic .............................. $3.00

Philosophy, Chemistry, Astronomy, Algebra,

Geometry, conic sections plane, trigonometry

and analytical geometry ........................................... $7.50

And for the study of the differential and integral

Calculus and Newton’s Principia ................................ $10.00

“Common schools” on a ward level were organized under the
administration of the university. Teachers were trained and certified by
the university. Schoolbooks were hard to come by, and the scriptures
were often substituted as readers. Jesse N. Smith reminisces over his
youthful school days in Nauvoo: “I attended school kept by a Miss
Mitchell in Hyrum Smith’s office. Passing the Prophets house one
morning, he called me to him and asked what book I read at school.
I replied ‘The Book of Mormon.’ He seemed pleased, and taking me
into the house he gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon to read in
at school, a gift greatly prized.”

Perhaps the first formal religion class for the youth of the Church
was held in Nauvoo, as reported by the Prophet Joseph under the aus-
pices of the Young Gentlemen and Ladies Relief Society:

In the latter part of January, 1843, a number of young people
assembled at the house of Elder Heber C. Kimball, who warned them
against the various temptations to which youth are exposed, exhort-
ing the young people to study the scriptures, and enable themselves
to “give a reason for the hope within them,” and to be ready to go to
the stage of action, when their present instructors and leaders had gone
behind the scenes; also to keep good company and to keep pure and
unspotted from the world.

. . . I addressed the young people for some time expressing my
gratitude to Elder Kimball for having commenced this glorious work,
which would be the means of doing a great deal of good, and said the
The Religious Educator • Vol 5 No 3 • 2004

gratitude of all good men and of the youth would follow him through life, and he would always look upon the winter of 1843 with pleasure.¹⁰

Schools in the West

Nauvoo’s educational system became the pattern for what the Church would do after immigrating to the Rocky Mountains. President Young encouraged the membership to pack in their wagons heading west “every book, map, chart, or diagram that may contain interesting, useful and attractive matter, to gain the attention of children, and cause them to love to learn to read.”¹¹

In the valley of the Great Salt Lake, shortly after the first seeds were sown, streams dammed, and trees felled for shelter, the Saints gathered their children for instruction. Seventeen-year-old Mary Dilworth and other devoted women, while coping with basic survival in the barren Great Basin, erected a tent, dusted off their primers, and rang the school bell for the children to gather for class.¹²

The University of Deseret, the first university west of the Missouri River, began at the home of John Pack. Forty students were enrolled in 1850. Tuition was eighty cents per week. In lieu of money, lumber, potatoes, cabbage, and other produce accepted. A historian noted that “the teachers salaries instead of being drawn on the bank were drawn on wheelbarrows.”¹³

Between 1847 and 1869, public common schools were for all intents and purposes ward schools. One remains in Salt Lake, newly restored, at the corner of Fourth South and Eleventh East. Some private family schools were built by Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and other influential Latter-day Saints with large families. As the railroad brought a degree of increased prosperity and plurality of population, the school system began to broaden its base. With the federal government’s intervention through prejudicial legislation attempting to Americanize the Mormons, secularized “free schools” were mandated. Government-appointed officials vowed to crush the Church’s control. The platform of M. W. Ashbrook, who ran for the territorial school superintendency, vilified President Young: “Every child brought into being has rights. One of the most sacred of these rights is to a liberal education . . . where knowledge is not distilled by the brain of a theocratic leper.”¹⁴

Free parochial schools were established. The primary objective of the mission schools—run by Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and others—was to Christianize the Mormons. Reverend Barrows, a Congregationalist, reported to his supervisors in Chicago from Salt Lake:
“There is no system of free schools. Great numbers of children are growing up in ignorance. And yet where schools are established they are well attended. . . . The Mormon people will send their children to our schools and Brigham Young and his bishops can’t prevent it.”

An increasing number of children of the Church patronized the denominational schools because of the commitment and quality of the mission teachers from the East and the nominal tuition.

**Church Academies**

It became increasingly clear that the Church must engage itself professionally in education. President Wilford Woodruff firmly resolved: “We feel that the time has arrived when the proper education of our children should be taken in hand by us as a people.”

From 1875 to 1911, twenty-two academies were organized throughout the stakes of Zion. Brigham Young Academy in Provo was the first; Dixie in St. George, the last. Two future prophets attended the Oneida Stake Academy in Preston, Idaho—Harold B. Lee from Clifton and Ezra Taft Benson from Whitney.

These academies produced not only great leaders but also memorable moments. For example, Spencer W. Kimball studied at the Gila Academy in Thatcher, Arizona. President Kimball reflected upon his academy school days as an athlete. Their coach challenged the University of Arizona in Tucson to a basketball game. The university team arrived in Thatcher with their noses in the air, thinking they were playing a mere Mormon high school team. Spencer W. Kimball wrote his memory of the game:

> It is a great occasion. Many people came tonight who have never been before. Some of the townsmen say basketball is a girl’s game but they came in large numbers tonight. Our court is not quite regulation. We are used to it, our opponents not. I have special luck with my shots tonight and the ball goes through the hoop again and again and the game ends with our High School team the victors against the college team. I am the smallest one and the youngest on the team. I have piled up the most points through the efforts of the whole team protecting me and feeding the ball to me. I am on the shoulders of the big fellows of the Academy. They are parading me around the hall to my consternation and embarrassment. I like basketball. I would rather play this game than eat.

In a similar setting, President Benson recalled a game-day experience as a student at the Oneida Academy: “Ezra remembers his father swearing only once. The Oneida Stake Academy was playing Brigham Young
College in Logan, and late in the game Oneida trailed by a point after failing to convert on several attempts. Ezra suddenly got the ball and an exasperated George yelled, ‘Hell, T. put it in!’ It was shocking to the local citizens coming from George Benson, but apparently they understood his enthusiasm and anxiety.” Ezra continued, “When we finished with a one-point victory, Father was overjoyed.”

Today only three of the twenty-two academies remain—BYU in Provo, BYU—Idaho in Rexburg, and Juárez Academy in Colonia Juárez, Mexico.

**Church Board of Education**

In 1888 the Church General Board of Education was organized to regulate the work of the academies and other educational endeavors. Karl G. Maeser was appointed superintendent. Dr. Maeser was born in Meissen, Germany, and was educated and taught in Dresden. His father was an accomplished artist who told his bright, industrious son the following story while showing him one of his paintings:

> Years ago I painted this scene. It was exhibited with the best work from our school and attracted the attention of an important china manufacturer. He asked the artist’s name and was told it was the work of John Gottfried Maeser. The manufacturer offered me a flattering salary to enter his employ and paint chinaware, but I refused. Soon a more alluring offer came, but it was as promptly refused. After due consideration, the manufacturer made a third and still more attractive offer for my talent. Poverty stared us in the face and with an over-burdened wife and an under-privileged family I yielded to the temptation and practically sold my birthright for a mess of pottage.

> My son, if it had not been for this temporary touch of success, the creations of my mind might have adorned the great art galleries of the world, and my name might have been written with the great artists of my time, but, Karl, I painted for bread too soon.

Karl Maeser never taught for bread. In the Salt Lake Cemetery stands Dr. Maeser’s granite grave marker with the inscription “Erected by his pupils.” No greater epitaph for an educator could be inscribed.

**Seminaries**

To counter the “Godless” secularization of the public school system, the Church organized in 1890 a system of weekday religion classes for children to be conducted after school hours, one of the first churches to do so in America.
The public schools continued to increase in resources and students. The membership of the Church felt the financial strain of supporting two school systems—the public through taxes and the Church through donations. In 1909, the Church Board of Education decided to shift the mission of the academies from secondary curriculum to that of normal colleges—to train and supply the public school system with qualified, faithful Latter-day Saint educators.

The concept of supplementing public high school curriculum with religious education began to germinate in the mind of Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, a counselor in the Granite Stake presidency and a professor at the University of Utah. The Church Board of Education was impressed with the Granite Stake’s proposal of release-time seminary classes for their youth. “President Merrill outlined his plan to the stake presidency. His plan was to teach the same religion classes as those taught in the Salt Lake Academy. . . to students released from high school for one class period each day. Classes would be held in a building erected by the stake close to Granite High School. 

Twenty-five hundred dollars was borrowed from Zions Bank, land was purchased, and a building was constructed consisting of a cloak room, an office with a small library, and one classroom. Next was the selection of a teacher. Joseph F. Merrill described the qualifications to the superintendent of Church schools, Horace H. Cummings:

April 23, 1912

Superintendent Horace H. Cummings, City,

Dear Superintendent:

. . . May I say that it is the desire of the man who is properly qualified to do the work in a most satisfactory manner. By young we do not necessarily mean a teacher young in years, but a man who is young in his feelings, who loves young people, who delights in their company, who can sympathize strongly with them and who can command their respect and admiration and exercise a great influence over them. We want a man who can enjoy student sports and activities as well as one who is a good teacher. We want a man who is a thorough student, one who will not teach in a perfunctory way, but who will enliven his instructions with a strong, winning personality and give evidence of thorough understanding of and scholarship in the things he teaches.

It is desired that this school be thoroughly successful and a teacher is wanted who is a leader and who will be universally regarded as the inferior to no teacher in the High School.
At the earliest convenience I shall be pleased to call on you and discuss this matter further with you.

(Signed) Joseph F. Merrill

Thomas J. Yates was the man. Raised in the sage-surrounded fields of Scipio as a boy, he studied in Provo at the feet of Karl G. Maeser. Brother Yates became a graduate of Cornell University in electrical engineering, a fine student of the scriptures, and a friend of youth. He was also a member of the Granite Stake high council. One of Brother Yates’s inaugural students in 1912 was Mildred Bennion. Many years later she wrote a letter upon request from a Granite Seminary graduating class:

In 1928 I was married to Henry Eyring, who is now Dean of the Graduate School at the U of U. We have 3 sons.

The oldest is now a sophomore at the U of U and attends the LDS Institute [today, Edward is a retired professor of chemistry at the University of Utah]. The second is at East High and attends seminary there [today, an Apostle and commissioner, Elder Henry B. Eyring]. The youngest is a Blazer in Primary [today, Harden is an administrator in the commissioner’s office for higher education in the State of Utah]. . . .

We moved to Utah at a considerable financial sacrifice in order that our sons could attend Seminaries and Institutes and find friends among our own people. That should answer the question of my feelings about such things.

I am very happy to know that I am counted among the students at the first Seminary organized by the Church.

Very Sincerely, Mildred Bennion Eyring.

Institutes

With increasing numbers of Latter-day Saint students attending colleges and universities, the next step was an extension of the seminary arrangement to non-Church institutions of higher learning. The early twenties were marked by the rising reputation of science and a decline in the influence of churches. Scientists were taking over the study and interpretation of the Bible by what came to be called higher criticism. Social scientists were endeavoring to provide a new scientific ethic, and behavioristic psychology was replacing sacred and philosophical literature in the study of man. Churches across America responded with religious foundations at the university level that were designed to persuade aspiring intellectuals of the validity of their theology and church message.
During this period of turmoil, there came a call for help to the First Presidency from Latter-day Saint professors at the University of Idaho in Moscow. As the First Presidency discussed the Moscow appeal for an institute of religion, President and Sister J. Wyley Sessions, former members of the university’s agricultural department, were just returning from a seven-year mission to South Africa. President Sessions related their conversation with the First Presidency and call to Moscow:

It was generally understood that after our release from the South African Mission that I would be assigned a job in Idaho with the church-controlled Utah-Idaho Sugar Company.

When President Heber J. Grant and President Charles W. Nibley were giving me the “final instructions,” President Nibley suddenly stopped, looked at President Grant, and said, “Heber, we are making a mistake.” President Grant replied, “Yes, I am afraid we are; I have not felt just right about assigning Brother Sessions to the sugar business.”

President Nibley looked at me and said, “Brother Sessions, you are the man to go to Moscow to take care of our students at the University.” I replied, “No, no; are you calling us on another mission?” President Grant chuckled and said, “Of course not; we are giving you a chance to render a great service to the Church, and a fine professional opportunity for yourself.” Sensing my disappointment, President Nibley arose and put his arm around me and said, “Don’t be disturbed, Brother Sessions, this is what the Lord wants you to do. God bless you!”

In 1926 the first institute of religion began at the University of Idaho.

**Early Morning and Home Study Seminary**

William E. Berrett, who served as administrator of seminaries and institutes of religion for seventeen years (President Boyd K. Packer and Elder A. Theodore Tuttle served as his assistants) reported in his history: “Beginning in 1953 the Department . . . began an expansion that was destined to reach around the world. Early morning daily seminary. Many bishops were at first skeptical that daily early morning classes could succeed and there was considerable reluctance on the part of many parents.”

In 1967 the seminary home study program was authorized by the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education on a pilot basis. The home study format was field tested in the Iowa-Indiana area. Much was learned about procedure, teacher training, and the development of a curriculum compelling enough to carry itself on a home study basis for teenagers. The vehicle had been found for responding to
the Board of Education’s call to transport religious education throughout the earth wherever the Church had been established.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, full-time CES personnel and their families were assigned to inaugurate the seminary and institute program worldwide. I share a personal note of experience on this era of international expansion.

In 1972 my wife Patricia and I, with a toddler and infant, boarded a Pan Am flight for the Philippines. After weathering a typhoon and the declaration of martial law during our first week in Manila, I headed north to the province where I had labored as a young missionary. In San Fernando, I visited friends and converts of seven years prior.

One family, in particular, was the Macapagals. Maria, a vivacious twelve-year-old, and her mother were faithful members of a struggling new branch when I left in 1964. I knocked at the door of their cinder-block, corrugated-steel-roofed home near the train station. Sister Macapagal answered. I had a difficult time convincing her that I was Elder Iba. I explained to her why I had returned and explained the seminary home study program.

I asked about Maria, who would have been nineteen or so. She responded by pulling the curtain that partitioned the room, and there, lying on a cot, mannequin-like, weighing fifty or sixty pounds, was Maria, in the last stages of Hodgkin’s disease. She lit up with her wonderful smile and sparkling eyes as I walked to her side. She asked if she could begin the seminary home study course she had heard me explain through the curtain. She said she had only six months to live and wanted to be better prepared to teach her relatives in the spirit world. I promised that as soon as the materials arrived in Manila she would be the first to receive them. When I returned a few weeks later, Maria was ready to study.

Her father, now the branch president, had suspended a mirror over her head so she could look up and read and write upside down and backwards. Due to her weakened condition, she could not sit up. One week before her death and passage into the world of spirits, Maria completed the last home study Book of Mormon lesson—nine months of work, a thousand pages or more, every written exercise completed. Her mother received a certificate of completion for Maria at the conclusion of that first seminary year in the Philippines.

The One Hundredth Country

Let me share one more personal story of CES’s entrance in the one hundredth country while serving as a zone administrator for Asia.
In 1993, Tim Kwok, area director, and I attended a seminary class held in a member’s home in Bangalore, India. An excerpt from my personal trip report reads:

Tim and I joined 12 smiling students in a small 7x11 foot plaster block room partially painted, with a bench, end table, woven floor mats and a picture of the Savior on the wall. The eight young ladies were dressed in western dresses and native Indian sarees with three young men and their teacher, Samson. After singing a hymn with the volume of a mini-Tabernacle Choir, which brought a number of curious neighbors to the open door, a humble prayer was offered. Samson then exchanged with the students their weekly home-study assignments from the New Testament student manual. The pages were loose and somewhat disorganized; three-ring binders do not exist in India. The lesson for the week was on the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. Bibles were shared as Samson referred to episodes in the book of Acts. The students, most sitting on the floor, eagerly listened and read and responded to questions asked by Samson. They were, as Samson later shared, somewhat reserved in their class participation due to our presence. He said they usually probe deeply into the scriptures and ask him very difficult questions. Samson, though a returned missionary, lacked polish by way of skills and methodology, but truly conveyed through his love for the scriptures and missionary work, in a land not unlike the world of Paul’s day, a powerful message and testimony.

I sometimes, in such circumstances, seriously reflect upon where all our high-tech teaching techniques and commodious, color-coordinated classrooms have brought us in the highly developed programs of Church Education. For certain, I am clearly awakened to the reality that the “sine qua non” of our teaching is a meekness of mind and childlike dependence on divine intervention for significant education to occur in matters of the Spirit. I was richly blessed for being in the presence of those beautiful and bright Indian students. I saw in their eyes the joy and hope found only in learning of one’s true heavenly ancestry as children of God and the realization of his matchless love.

Hundreds of such examples could be published demonstrating the blessing of religious education in the lives of the youth across the earth.

There are many other important snapshots of our educational legacy that I have not developed, such as schools in the Pacific and Mexico, special needs and incarcerated programs, continuing education, and literacy.

As religious educators, we are under contract as teachers and administrators, drawing our income from the sacred funds of the Church. We are about the Lord’s business as trusted agents of the Church Board of Education and the priesthood. President Boyd K. Packer wrote a letter of appreciation and encouragement to Stanley A.
Peterson, then serving as administrator, which was forwarded with the letter of appointment to each full-time teacher in 1996:

April 22, 1996

Dear Brother Peterson:

I wish it could be possible for me to meet privately with each seminary and institute teacher. Each time I meet with our young people, there is affirmed to me again the incomparable value of and the urgent need for the work our teachers do.

Donna and I talk now and then about how wonderful it would be if I could return to the seminary class. Knowing what I now know of the Church and of the future awaiting our youth, we could work with the assurance that the teaching of the gospel to them is of crucial importance. We could be content with the knowledge that what I would do in the classroom, while different from, would compare in importance to what I do now. The realities and challenges faced by our teachers and their families would be more bearable if they could know as we who lead the Church know, how indispensable they are to the work of the Lord.

As you travel among them, will you please tell them how much we appreciate them. They deserve and I am sure they receive the approval and the blessings of the Lord.

Faithfully yours,

Boyd K. Packer
Acting President
Quorum of the Twelve

May we sense the immeasurable blessing and associated responsibility that are ours as religious educators to build upon the rich legacy we are beneficiaries of, from the School of the Prophets in the Whitney Store in Kirtland to our personal classrooms in over 135 countries throughout the world.

Notes

3. Smith, History of the Church, 2:356.
6. Smith, History of the Church, 2:344; emphasis added.
7. Milton L. Bennion, Mormonism and Education (Salt Lake City: Depart-
ment of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1939), 19.
8. Sidney Rigdon, Oration delivered by Mr. Sidney Rigdon on the 4th of July, 1838 (Far West, Missouri Journal Office, 1838), 9.
12. See Kate B. Carter, “The University of Utah and Other Schools of Early Days,” Daughters of Utah Pioneers, lesson for October 1950, 1.
17. Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., Spencer W. Kimball (Salt Lake City Bookcraft, 1977), 65.
22. Quoted in C. Coleman, History of Granite Seminary, 142.
For She Loved Much, painting by Jeff Hein

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
It was Alexander Pope who immortalized the words “To err, is human; to forgive, divine.” One of the inherent facts of mortality is that we all commit sin. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and John cautioned us that “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8). In this dispensation Elder Richard G. Scott said that “this subject [of repentance] is widely misunderstood and often feared. Some feel that it is to be employed only by those in serious transgression, while the Lord intended that it be consistently used by every one of His children.” Likewise, Elder Henry B. Eyring teaches: “The truth is that we all need repentance. If we are capable of reason and past the age of eight, we all need the cleansing that comes through applying the full effects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”

So, while Alexander Pope penned his adage to encourage us to forgive one another, I would like to use it to reflect on the great desire of the divine Savior to forgive all who come unto Him.

Luke records an incident in Jesus’s life that demonstrates His great desire to reach out to all people, regardless of their social status. To set the scene, Jesus appears to be in the town of Nain, where He raised the widow’s son from the dead and where John the Baptist’s disciples came to Him to inquire whether He is the expected Messiah. In addition, immediately prior to our story, Jesus responded to the Pharisees’ and lawyers’ criticism that He is “a friend of publicans and sinners” (Luke 7:34). Then we read the following:
And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down [probably reclined on a couch beside the dinner table] to meat.

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence [about fifteen months’ wages for a laborer], and the other fifty [about one and a half months’ wages].

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. (Luke 7:36–50)
As I have contemplated this story, I have come to appreciate more deeply its message from two perspectives. The first is the more obvious of the two. It is clearly a powerful example of the forgiveness and peace that Christ offers to those who come unto Him. This story is just as much about Simon and the Savior’s attempt to reach out to him as it is about the woman who washed the Savior’s feet with her tears. There are wonderful lessons to be learned as readers contemplate the Savior’s interactions with both of these individuals. The second perspective I have come to appreciate is how the author, Luke, pedagogically uses the story to draw his readers in and to encourage each of them to identify with and learn from the experiences of both Simon and the woman. There is real power in this story as readers alternately identify themselves with both of these individuals.

As the story opens, an unnamed Pharisee invites Jesus into his home for a formal banquet. Remember that immediately prior to this story, Jesus had just responded to Pharisees who criticized His ministry. Other events in the Gospels show that the Pharisees were famous for their legalistic interpretations of the scriptural commandments and the oral laws that they had developed around them. Many times Jesus and the Pharisees were at odds with each other over such things as what is permissible to do on the Sabbath (see, for example, Matthew 12:1–14; John 5:1–16) and their rules about cleanliness, especially as it pertained to eating (see Matthew 15:1–20). In fact, Matthew 23 records one of the harshest denunciations that Jesus ever made, and it was directed, in large part, against the Pharisees.

Yet, although Jesus’s dinner host initially identified with the Pharisees, something unique happens in this story. Unlike all the other Pharisees mentioned in the four Gospels, this particular Pharisee’s name is recorded. It is Simon. I believe this reminds the readers that Jesus knows each person as an individual and that He responds to each according to his or her individual needs. Further, the Savior sees beyond the labels that society places upon them. Simon is not just one of a group of Pharisees who have fought against the Savior at every turn; rather, the Savior responded to him as an individual who is in need of His help, even if he doesn’t realize it! The irony, of course, is that Jesus treats Simon in such a way that he does not reciprocate to the woman who enters his house. Simon simply sees her as “a woman in the city, which is a sinner” (Luke 7:37; see also verse 39) and thus interprets her actions only within that framework.

Luke does not indicate why Simon invited the Savior to eat with him. There is a feeling that he knew of Jesus’s fame and maybe had
even listened to one of His sermons. In a sense, the details of what drew Simon to the Savior might have limited the reader from identifying with Simon. There are a multitude of reasons that lead individuals to invite the Savior into their homes, but the motivation is not nearly as important as the invitation, so Luke emphasizes that. Yet it is also obvious that even though Simon had extended the invitation, he did not have a clear understanding of who Jesus really was. Some previous encounter must have caused him to at least contemplate that Jesus was a prophet, but he dismisses this identification when he sees the way that Jesus allows the woman to treat Him (verse 39). The irony here is that Jesus chooses to show Simon that He is indeed a prophet, not by judging the woman’s outward actions but by calling Simon to task for his own thoughts.

What I love about the exchange that follows is that while Jesus clearly chastises him for his thoughts, He uses the moment not so much to condemn Simon but to teach him. He hopes that Simon will better understand who Jesus is and what His mission is and also that he will move beyond the societal labels so that he can recognize the potential of this daughter of God. Societal labels are so often based on external criteria, and clearly Simon views the woman’s actions through lenses of one of these labels. But the Lord has always used a different standard. He taught Samuel that He “looketh on the heart” of an individual (1 Samuel 16:7).

Jesus’s question, “Seest thou this woman?” in verse 44, is an invitation for Simon to lift his sights and see the woman as the Savior saw her. To help him make that transition, Jesus offers him the parable of the two debtors and then, with probing questions, guides Simon to the mirror of self-awareness. Although Simon probably considered himself to be a righteous man, at least by Pharisaic standards, he had failed to recognize what it meant to invite the Son of God to dwell with him, even if it was only for a single meal. He had invited the Savior as a guest into his home but then had neglected to treat him with the respect He deserved. The Pharisees were correct when they charged that Jesus ate with sinners, but in this case, regardless of how Simon might have judged his personal worthiness, the sinner was not the woman.

Are there lessons that we can learn from Simon? Are there ways that we sometimes can relate to him? Are we at times guilty of inviting the Savior into our homes but then failing to treat Him with the respect He deserves? Are there times when we mechanically attend church without actively participating in the gospel? We extended the invitation to Christ on the day we were baptized, and we reissue it to
Him every time we partake of the sacrament or go to the temple. But are there times when we, like Simon, fail to provide water for Him to wash His feet by failing to magnify our home-teaching or visiting-teaching assignments? Do we sometimes neglect to greet Him with a kiss by neglecting to reach out to those in need within our sphere of influence? Do we sometimes forget to provide oil to anoint His head by filling our minds with good intentions but then either procrastinating or just failing to follow through? Luke doesn’t record how Simon responds to the Savior’s teachings. He leaves it open perhaps so that his readers can write their own conclusions from the annals of their own lives.7

Unlike Simon, the woman in this story is not named. In fact, there is much that we do not know about her. She was a real person, but by and large she remains anonymous. The one detail that Luke provides about her past is that people considered her to be “a woman in the city, which was a sinner,” and Jesus acknowledges in verse 47 that her sins “are many.” This has led many, including Simon (see verse 39), to view her as a prostitute,8 but it is important to note that Luke never makes that label explicit in his recounting of the story.9 Two important reasons may explain Luke’s ambiguity here. On the one hand, it is a reminder, as Elder Scott taught, that everyone has “many sins” that need the healing power of the Atonement.10 Since this woman is anonymous, she represents everyone who reads the story. But the suggestion of her past life also serves as a powerful sense of hope that Christ’s Atonement can and will heal even one of the most serious of sins (see Alma 39:3–6). President Boyd K. Packer reiterates that same sense of hope when he says, “There are times you cannot mend that which you have broken. Perhaps the offense was long ago, or the injured refused your penance. Perhaps the damage was so severe that you cannot fix it no matter how desperately you want to.” I can imagine that this was once how the woman in our story felt. But then President Packer continues: “When your desire is firm and you are willing to pay the ‘uttermost farthing,’ the law of restitution is suspended. Your obligation is transferred to the Lord. He will settle your accounts. I repeat, save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the atonement of Christ.”11

This unnamed woman had experienced the power of that complete forgiveness before she ever entered Simon’s house. Again, Luke does not record the details of her journey to repentance. Such things do not
occur in an instant.  

Note what Elder McConkie has to say: “Here is a woman who once was a sinner but now is clean. Jesus is not going to forgive her sins—he has already done so; it happened when she believed and was baptized in his name; it happened when she repented with full purpose of heart and pledged her life and every breath she thereafter drew to the Cause of Righteousness.”  

Luke’s silence on the specific details gives his readers another opportunity to insert the details from their own life pages. Jesus’s declaration to the woman in verse 48, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” is a reiteration of what the woman already knew, but it is also a public declaration for Simon and his other guests at the banquet. As one New Testament scholar has noted, “She does not need forgiveness from God, but she does need recognition of her new life and forgiveness among God’s people.”  

So why does this woman seek out the Savior if it is not to obtain His forgiveness? It is precisely because she has tasted the sweetness and healing power of Christ in her life that she seeks Him out to thank Him. Words apparently could not adequately convey the feelings of her soul at that time, so instead she expressed her gratitude and love in abject humility by washing His feet with her tears, wiping them with the hair of her head, kissing them, and anointing them with ointment. This is a very tender, intimate moment. Perhaps she felt as the Apostle John did when he wrote, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Luke has drawn his readers into this story. He wants each of them to identify with this woman, but how can modern readers show their love for the Savior? The Savior taught some very concrete ways His followers can show that love. He taught His disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Later in the same discourse He focused even more specifically. “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). In effect, He was encouraging them to live the second great commandment (see Matthew 22:39). Jesus’s brother James later taught that “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).  

And so the Savior reminds the woman that “thy faith hath saved thee” (Luke 7:50). Her faith had given her hope that forgiveness was possible. Her faith had led her to overcome her fears and seek out the Savior. Her faith had led her to pay the “uttermost farthing” to receive her forgiveness. Her experience with the Savior shows Luke’s readers what is possible for all people who allow Christ to encircle them in the arms of His love. Note the pleading of President Gordon B. Hinckley:
Don’t ever feel that you can’t be forgiven. Our Father in Heaven loves you. He is your Father. He is your Heavenly Parent. He has great concern for you. He reaches out to you in love and forgiveness. . . . Our Father in Heaven will take care of the forgiveness. You put it behind you. You talk with your bishop. You live in righteousness. You do what is right and things will work out for you. I don’t want to see you going around brooding forever about something, some little thing, perhaps, that may have happened, or some serious thing that may have happened. There is hope. There is forgiveness. There is peace for those who follow the right path.  

It is therefore not surprising that the last direction the Savior has for this woman is to “go in peace” (Luke 7:50). Having received the power of the Atonement, she can finally find peace with herself, with her God, and, hopefully, with Simon and his other guests. As the Savior taught, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). But notice that having received this peace, the woman is told to take it with her as she leaves Simon’s house and returns to the world. Peace in the world can only be achieved only as individuals come unto Christ, receive of His love and forgiveness, and then return to the world to, in turn, help others do as this unnamed woman did.

Yes, “to err is human,” but forgiveness, ultimate forgiveness, is a divine blessing bestowed upon us through the Atonement. The Savior is waiting with open arms to bestow it upon all those who would come unto Him. The more I have read and pondered the experiences of Simon and the unnamed woman recorded in this short passage, the more I have come to appreciate how much the Savior loves me and reaches out for me. Sometimes I am like Simon. Sometimes I invite the Savior into my home but fail to treat Him as an honored guest. Sometimes my devotion is mechanical. But although He chastises me, I have felt a warming glow in my soul as He helps me raise my spiritual sights and strive for more than spiritual mediocrity. At other times the power of His love is so overwhelming that all I can do is to fall at His feet in humble gratitude and love for all that He does for me. I bear testimony that in either situation I find myself, I know “his hand is stretched out still” (Isaiah 9:17), beckoning me to come unto Him.

Notes

4. Later in Luke the accusation of the Pharisees and scribes is not only that Jesus is the friend of publicans and sinners but also that He eats with them (see Luke 15:1–2). See also the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10.
5. Recognizing that Jesus was reclining on a couch helps us make better sense of the detail that the woman stood behind His feet when she began to wash them with her tears (see Luke 7:38). This point (along with the fact that there are others also at the meal) suggests that this was a formal banquet. In Roman times, formal banquets consisted of two parts: the *deipnon* (the meal proper) and the *symposion* (the period of conversation and debate after the meal). The incident described in Luke 7:36–50 takes place during the *symposion* (see François Bovon, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, trans. Christine M. Thomas, ed. Helmut Koester [Hermeneia Series; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002], 290; Dennis E. Smith, “Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 [December 1987]: 614).
6. We must be careful here that we do not fall into the same trap that some of the Saints in Rome did about Paul’s teachings. Some there misunderstood his teachings to be that we should “continue in sin, [so] that grace may abound” (see Romans 6:1; see also Romans 6:15; see also Romans 3:8). Jesus is not encouraging Simon to go out and sin so that he will love the Savior more!
12. The reading of verse 47 in the King James Version seems to indicate that Jesus forgives her because of her outpourings of love. There are two reasons that suggest otherwise. The perfect tense of the Greek word *a·fì·o·ntai* can be translated as “have been forgiven” (John J. Kilgallen, “John the Baptist, the Sinful Woman, and the Pharisee,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 [1985]: 675–79). In addition, Jesus’s use of the parable of the two debtors strongly indicates that the outpouring of love is the result of forgiveness rather than the catalyst for it. The important Greek word is the conjunction *hoti* that is here translated in a causal sense, “because.” However, it can also be translated in a logical or resultant sense (see John 9:19; 1 John 3:14; Matthew 8:27; Hebrews 2:6). For a discussion of this second point, see Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 692.
15. King Benjamin taught that while it is important to *receive* a remission of our sins, it is equally important that we *retain* that remission “from day to day.” Note what he identifies as the best way to retain it: “I would that ye should impart
of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26). In the scriptures, one of the greatest examples of someone who did this is the Apostle Paul. Not only did he spend the rest of his life after his conversion administering spiritually to those in need, he was also heavily involved in collecting money to aid the poor in Jerusalem (see Galatians 2:7–10; Romans 15:25–27). Likewise, in the cases of Alma the Younger and the Sons of Mosiah, we know that after they had felt the power of Christ’s Atonement in their lives, they were also keen to administer spiritual relief to those in need (see Alma 36:23–26; Mosiah 28:3–5).

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdelene” (John 19:25).

*The Crucifixion of Christ*, Artist Unknown, Museum of Church History and Art

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
It is apparent from the text of the New Testament that the name Mary (the Greek form of the Hebrew Miriam) was a common name in first-century Palestine. Consider these Marys: Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Mary of Cleophas, Mary the mother of John Mark, and Mary of Rome. The task of keeping these seven important women of the New Testament straight frequently results in confusion or misidentification. Therefore, it is not surprising that from early-morning seminary classes to New Testament classes at Brigham Young University, religious educators consistently field inquiries about these seven women mentioned in the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. Thus, we will clearly identify these women in order to resolve confusion and misidentification where possible. Moreover, in delineating the differences between the seven Marys, we also see the characteristics of deep discipleship common to each woman, which we will accomplish in three stages.

First, to provide context, we will briefly explore the role of women in first-century Palestine. A general awareness of the sociocultural nuances of this time period is imperative to understanding the significant role these seven women played in the early Church. Second, we will survey how the four Evangelists and Paul (in the case of Mary of Rome) portrayed these women as disciples of Christ in their respective settings and circumstances. This survey will be grounded in scriptural texts and the careful use of extracanonical sources. Last, we will provide two charts intended to serve as quick reference tools for determining
the location and frequency of references to the women named Mary. Because the Gospel writers provided more narrative regarding the activities of Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Bethany, the sections devoted to them will be lengthier and include greater detail. The biblical texts addressing Mary of James and Joses, Mary of Cleophas, Mary of John Mark, and Mary of Rome range from modest to scant. Thus, the brevity of their treatment in the New Testament is reflected in the length of discussion we devote to these four women. Nevertheless, we will discover clues in the available narrative that unlock, in part, the noble stature of these women.

Women in First-Century Palestine

As one scholar noted: “If writing women’s lives is never simple, to write about Jewish women’s lives during the years and in the regions where Christianity first emerged is fraught with distinctive perils.” One of those distinctive perils may be the tendency to overgeneralize and oversimplify the subject matter. However, having taken into account the multiple and varied nuances associated with gender issues of the time, we draw the following conclusion: as a general rule, women in first-century Palestine faced a difficult life. Specifics will be offered in the following overview, which is by no means comprehensive, in an effort to provide context to our primary focus on New Testament women named Mary.

In Jesus’s day, all women in the Greco-Roman world lived within a strict patriarchal framework. However, there was a good deal of variety in the opportunities afforded women from one culture to another. For example, a Roman woman could not rule, but she could be a force of power behind the man on the throne. An Egyptian woman could actually rule. Women in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Egypt could engage in private business. Though women in Roman society did not enjoy as many freedoms as their peers in Egypt or Macedonia, they enjoyed higher levels of education because educating women in Roman circles was deemed important.

By comparison, Jewish women of first-century Palestine were more limited. Like the greater Greco-Roman world, Jewish culture of Jesus’s day was staunchly patriarchal and, generally speaking, a woman was to remain unobserved in public life. Prior to her marriage, she answered entirely to her father, and it was preferred that she not leave the home at all. Furthermore, if the situation warranted it, her father could sell her into slavery before she came of age to marry.

The betrothal ceremony marked the beginning of the transfer of
power over the woman from father to husband. Legally, betrothal involved two steps and constituted a relationship akin to marriage that could only be broken by a formal divorce. During this period the couple was considered husband and wife, albeit they did not share the same home or bed. The first step involved a marriage contract before witnesses, and the second step involved the husband taking his wife from her father’s home to live in his family home. This two-step process generally lasted approximately one year and was usually completed by the time the woman was twelve or thirteen. The woman’s move into the home of her husband constituted his complete authority over her, but she gained few freedoms in the exchange. Her status in society was just above that of a Gentile or a slave, and she was obligated to obey her husband as strictly as a slave obeyed his or her master. She could own property through inheritance, but given the early age of betrothal, it was rare for a woman to enter marriage holding property independent of her husband. Furthermore, while education was granted to young boys from privileged families, their female peers usually received no formal schooling. Subsequently, the vast majority of Jewish women of the period were illiterate, having received only basic religious training. Finally, she could not hold public office, and her public testimony was strictly limited if it contradicted the word of her husband. Josephus records that in certain cases, her witness could not be trusted or admitted in legal proceedings “on account of the levity and boldness of [her] sex.” Generally speaking, however, her word was considered more trustworthy than that of a Gentile or a slave.

It is not surprising, then, that a Jewish woman in Palestine, like women in other parts of the Greco-Roman world, was discouraged from moving freely in society. She could venture out into public to fulfill some of her domestic duties, but only if heavily veiled. Interaction of any kind with men was forbidden. In some cases, even a greeting between a man and a woman could lead to divorce. Of course, there existed a spectrum of application for these cultural expectations among Jewish women in Palestine. For practical reasons, peasants in small villages could not fully subscribe to many of these requirements because there were animals to feed, fields to tend, and water to fetch for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. Obviously, these activities required movement outside the home. In this regard, strict adherence to these cultural expectations was often viewed as a mark of status, as only the wealthy could afford to have their women maintain true seclusion. Even so, a woman’s world in Palestine typically revolved around housework, husband, and children.
The domestic duty of rearing children rested solely on her shoulders, and the birth of a daughter was viewed as a mixed blessing. A son was nursed by his mother twice as long as a daughter, who was always placed behind sons, even in the essentials of life such as basic nutrition. From birth, then, Jewish women in Palestine were largely absent from male-dominated public life in many ways. This exclusion was rarely negated except in the pitiable case of widowhood, wherein a woman was allowed to assume male roles in order to ensure survival for herself and her children. Because a woman’s legal status was tied to her husband, his death left her detached from the few rights and protections afforded her by the law.

In the realm of religious practice, scriptural directives regarding women provided a limited reprieve. The Torah mandates that honor be shown to a mother (see Exodus 20). Also, the spiritual significance of the mother was manifest in the fact that Jewish lineage for her children was determined by her bloodline. Finally, a Jewish woman in Palestine was afforded the opportunity to enter into Nazarite vows (see Numbers 6), participate in feasts and associated sacrificial meals (see Exodus 12), offer sacrifice (see Luke 2:22–24), and serve in the temple (see Luke 2:36–38). Beyond these, however, a woman’s worship experiences were generally limited to those activities that could be carried out within the privacy of the home and that served to preserve and pass on religious traditions and practices to her children.

While this depiction of the treatment of women may be troubling to readers today, it represents the general conditions that women faced in day-to-day living two millennia ago. Without question, exceptions to these general rules existed, and no doubt many Jewish women of Palestine lived full and happy lives within their own socioeconomic, spiritual, and cultural niche. However, as a general rule, Jewish women in Palestine enjoyed limited civic rights, were restricted in religious involvement, and were valued almost exclusively for their procreative abilities and domestic services.

This, then, is part of the stage onto which Jesus stepped. We can only imagine the uplifting and immediate effects His ministry and teachings had upon women who heard and embraced His message. Many of these effects are evident in the lives of the women named Mary in the New Testament.

Jesus and the Status of Women

Understanding the sociocultural and religious norms and their impact upon Jewish men and women in Palestine in the first century
allows one to draw a conclusion regarding the ministry of Jesus. The
gospel, Acts, and the writings of Paul not only bear witness of
Jesus’s divine mission but also document Jesus’s desire to raise the sta-
tus of women, even if it meant challenging the current social practices
of the day. Indeed, Elder James E. Talmage taught that “the world’s
greatest champion of woman and womanhood is Jesus the Christ.”

Some examples of the Savior’s breaks with social norms of the day
include conversing with the woman at the well in Samaria and bearing
witness of His divinity (see John 4:5–29), inviting women to travel
with Him and be His disciples (see Luke 8:1–3), publicly expressing
compassion to the widow of Nain both in conversation and in the act
of raising her son from the dead (see Luke 7:11–15), allowing women
who were ritually unclean to touch His person (see Luke 8:43–48),
and, on at least two occasions, allowing women to unveil their heads in
public to use their hair to wash or anoint His feet (see Luke 7:36–39;
John 12:1–3). Christ also taught with parables whose central fi gures
were women (see Matthew 25:1–13; Luke 18:1–8; Luke 15:8–9), and
He allowed a woman to temporarily abandon certain domestic duties
in order to be instructed at His feet (see Luke 10:38–42).

These and many more examples in the Gospels constitute radical
departures from the accepted norms of the day. Taken together, we
see the Savior’s earnest desire to institute reform and generate spiritual
equity within the bonds of discipleship. In His day, such a reforma-
tion was repugnant to most. As a disciple of Jesus, a woman frequently
enjoyed greater privileges than her peers in Palestine and the Greco-
Roman world. The following surveys of the women named Mary
should be considered in this context.

Mary, Mother of Jesus

The authors of the four Gospel accounts in the New Testament
provide the most significant treatment of Mary, the mother of Jesus,
in the rise of Christianity. Furthermore, from a Latter-day Saint per-
spective, no woman is esteemed more highly than Mary. Our esteem
for her does not rise to the level of worship—to be sure, she is not
considered a mediator between mankind and God—nevertheless, she
is viewed as a chosen vessel of the Lord. This high regard is captured
in latter-day scripture. In fact, the Book of Mormon contains four
prophecies that address the significance of Mary. First, we learn from
Nephi that Mary was an exceedingly fair virgin who carried the Son of
God in her arms and nurtured him to adulthood (see 1 Nephi 11). Sec-
ond, King Benjamin taught the people of Zarahemla that the mother
of the Son of God “shall be called Mary” (Mosiah 3:8). Third, Alma’s prophecy about Mary describes her as a virtuous woman who is “a precious and chosen vessel” (Alma 7:10). Finally, the Lamanite leader King Lamoni came to know through a vision that the Messiah would “be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name” (Alma 19:13). Taken together, these prophecies indicate the importance of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the canon of scripture that has emerged in our day. The fact that King Benjamin identified Mary by name approximately 124 years before her birth places her in a small circle of individuals whose names were known before their mortal life began, such as Noah, Aaron, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and Joseph Smith.

Latter-day prophets and apostles have also described the greatness of Mary, the mother of Jesus. One example is found in the writings of Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Can we speak too highly of her whom the Lord has blessed above all women? There was only one Christ, and there is only one Mary. Each was noble and great in preexistence, and each was foreordained to the ministry he or she performed.”

Of course, the importance of Mary is an evident feature of the four Gospel accounts. In fact, three of the four Evangelists (Mark excluded) focus on the mother of Jesus as their testimonies unfold. The first two chapters of Matthew, whose Gospel account is directed primarily to a Jewish audience, center heavily upon Jesus under the watchful care of Mary and Joseph. In chapter 1, he provides a genealogy of Joseph’s line, intending to prove that Jesus was of royal descent from the tribe of Judah and was truly the “Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). Luke provides a genealogy that some believe is the royal lineage of Mary, who also descended from King David (see Luke 3:23–38). Talmage explains that “a personal genealogy of Joseph was essentially that of Mary also, for they were cousins. Joseph is named as son of Jacob by Matthew, and as son of Heli by Luke; but Jacob and Heli were brothers, and it appears that one of the two was the father of Joseph and the other the father of Mary.” It is important to note, however, that while Joseph is of Davidic descent, he is not the father of the Savior; Jesus’s descent from the Davidic line rests solely in Mary’s royal lineage.

Matthew describes Mary’s espousal to Joseph. She is contractually bound to him but does not yet live in his home. Under these circumstances, Mary is “found with child” following her stay in Judea, and Joseph is “minded to put her away privily” (Matthew 1:19). An angelic ministerant appears to Joseph in a dream to intervene on Mary’s behalf.
The angel tells him to fear not to take Mary to wife, explaining that the child in her womb is the Savior of mankind and should be named Jesus (see Matthew 1:20–21). The second chapter of Matthew continues with Jesus’s birth in Bethlehem, the family’s flight into Egypt, and Mary and Joseph’s relocation to Nazareth in Galilee. Again, each of these experiences is in direct fulfillment of ancient prophecy.

Taken together, the details of the first two chapters of Matthew’s narrative reach a climax in the following words: “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23; emphasis added; see also Isaiah 7:14). In other words, Jesus and Mary stand together at the meridian of time to fulfill centuries-old prophecies about the miraculous birth of the Son of God. Furthermore, the essential role of Mary in the life of Jesus becomes more accentuated when we consider that it would have been acceptable, even normal, in first-century Palestine to have written about the Son of God without even noting the woman who gave birth to Him. Again, given the lowly status of women at the time, it is remarkable that Mary receives such prominence in the opening lines of Matthew’s testimony. In this case, such a break from cultural norms lends credibility to the chronicle.

The Markan account, generally recognized to be the earliest Gospel composed (a position we accept), is substantially leaner in details about Mary, the mother of Jesus. His focus on her is designed to establish the difference between being in Christ’s physical family (father, mother, brothers, and sisters) and belonging to His spiritual family as a disciple (through conversion, calling, obedience, and loyalty). In every case, membership in His spiritual family prevails over membership in His physical family (see Mark 3:13–19, 31–35; 6:3–4).

Mark is the first Evangelist to recognize Mary as the mother of children other than Jesus (see Mark 3:31). Matthew, writing later, provides the names of the brothers (James, Joses, Simon, and Judas) and informs us that Jesus had sisters as well (Matthew 13:55–56).

Following the birth of the Savior, Mary and Joseph experienced the normal relationships between a husband and wife and had children of their own. This conclusion is supported by Matthew, who wrote, “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son” (Matthew 1:24–25). This strongly implies a normal, intimate husband-wife relationship—the
natural result of which would be children.28

With the picture of Mary surrounded by several children instead of just one, we may conclude that her life was anything but simple. Caring for Joseph along with five sons and at least two daughters would have created substantial domestic duties for Mary. According to Jeremias, she would have been responsible to “grind meal, bake, wash, cook, suckle the children, prepare her husband’s bed and, as repayment for her keep, to work the wool by spinning and weaving. Other duties were that of preparing her husband’s cup, and of washing his face, hands and feet.”29 This portrait, couched first in Mark’s Gospel, allows us to view Mary as a prototype for female disciples in the first century. In Mark’s initial description of Mary, we find a typical woman of the day—she has a family to care for and a burden of domestic duties to look after. While she is part of Christ’s physical family, she is not yet part of His spiritual family (see Mark 3:31–35). The implied message of Mark is that even the mother of Jesus must embrace the gospel preached by Him and be ushered into His holy circle of influence. Her social status as a woman in Palestine cannot be viewed as an acceptable deterrent in her quest to join the spiritual family of Jesus and become a full-fledged disciple.30

It is apparent from Luke’s text that, like Mark, he is providing through Mary a pattern of discipleship. From Luke we will explore four characteristics of an ideal disciple exemplified by Mary: (1) regardless of socioeconomic status, humility yields goodness; (2) virtuous living instills beauty and conviction; (3) courage in the face of opposition is a hallmark of discipleship; and (4) discipleship requires strict obedience to the laws and ordinances of God.

_Humility_. Luke is the only Gospel writer who named Nazareth as Mary’s childhood home and the village wherein the Annunciation occurred. The insignificance of Nazareth was proverbial, as evidenced in Nathaniel’s exclamation, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Furthermore, the village is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the writings of Josephus, or the Talmud. Archaeological findings indicate that some two to four hundred people lived in the unwalled village in the first century. The remains of numerous winepresses, olive presses, caves for storing grain, and cisterns for water indicate that the economy of Nazareth was primarily agricultural with some craftsmen like Joseph in the population.31 To be sure, Nazareth was virtually unknown in the Roman Empire and was distanced from major roads and significant trade. The evidence suggests that the small village could barely sustain the economy of a peasant class, meaning that acute poverty was the rule in Nazareth.32 As will be seen, Mary belonged
to the ranks of the impoverished of Nazareth. It was to this village that
the angel Gabriel was sent to visit the young girl Mary. From this visit
we learn that humility is a core characteristic of Mary’s discipleship.

Luke explains that Gabriel “came in unto her,” suggesting that his
visitation to Mary occurred indoors (Luke 1:28). Given the domestic
responsibilities that would have been hers by the time she was twelve to
fourteen years of age, the angel’s appearance within Mary’s modest Naz-
areth home seems likely. Whatever the case, Gabriel employed language
indicative of Mary’s chosen status, proclaiming that she was “highly
favoured” and saying, “The Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among
women” (Luke 1:28). According to Luke, Mary was not troubled by
the presence of Gabriel but rather by his exclamations of favor in her
behalf (see Luke 1:29). In her meekness, she silently wondered how she
could be such a highly favored and blessed woman in the sight of God.
Her humility is exemplary and places her in a category of Old Testament
personalities such as Adam, Eve, Abraham, Sarah, Rebekah,
Rachel, and Moses, whose humility also yielded much goodness.

Virtue. Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive and
bring forth a son who should be named Jesus and who would be the
“Son of the Highest” and would “reign over the house of Jacob for
ever” (Luke 1:32–33). At this juncture, her silence was broken by her
question to Gabriel: “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”
(Luke 1:34). Such a bold and resolute response from Mary is the out-
growth of her disposition to strictly observe God’s commandment to
live a chaste life.

Virtue was a fundamental aspect of Mary’s beauty. As we have
seen, when Nephi beheld Mary in vision, he described her as “a virgin,
most beautiful and fair above all other virgins” (1 Nephi 11:15). In this
light, consider the words of David O. McKay: “There is a beauty every
girl has—a gift from God, as pure as the sunlight, and as sacred as life.
It is a beauty that all men love, a virtue that wins all men’s souls. That
beauty is chastity. Chastity without skin beauty may enkindle the soul;
skin beauty without chastity can kindle only the eye. Chastity enshrined
in the mould of true womanhood will hold true love eternally.”

In answer to Mary’s query “how shall this be?” Gabriel discreetly
explained that “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of
the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which
shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Com-
menting on this verse, Elder McConkie wrote: “Our Lord was
destined to have all of the essential experiences of mortality, including
. . . birth in the natural and literal sense.” Beyond this affirmation of
Jesus’s literal sonship, little should be said except that Mary was chosen and found worthy to have the Holy Ghost come upon her, enabling the power of the Highest to overshadow her, allowing her to become the mother of the Son of God. Mary’s response to Gabriel’s announcement was typical of the confidence, strength, and perception possessed by disciples who live above reproach. She said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). This upright willingness cast Mary in the role of a type and shadow of the submissive disposition of her yet unborn son Jesus.

Courage. True disciples “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places,” regardless of the pressures or conditions that are brought to bear upon them (Mosiah 18:9). Courage to stand, particularly in the face of opposition, is a hallmark of discipleship. In this regard, Mary may be grouped with Eve, Sarah, Zipporah, Emma Smith, and others as one of the most courageous individuals depicted in scripture. While there are several illustrations of Mary’s courage found throughout the Gospel accounts, Luke provides two examples that occur early in her life and that are associated with her initial experiences with motherhood. From them we learn that Mary possessed a courageous disposition at a very early age and maintained that characteristic throughout her life, as is evidenced by her intrepid action to stand by her son throughout His terrible ordeal at Golgotha.

First, sometime after conception but before her espoused husband Joseph had knowledge of her pregnancy, Mary traveled to the home of her aged relative Elisabeth. Mary had learned from the angel that Elisabeth was six months pregnant with John the Baptist (see Luke 1:36). It is likely that Zacharias and Elisabeth lived some ninety miles south of Nazareth in a city or village near Jerusalem. The exact justification behind such an arduous journey by the youthful Mary is not known. Certainly, she would not have undertaken the potentially perilous trip without escorts. Perhaps Gabriel commanded Mary to travel to Judea. It is also possible that Mary felt a need to assist her cousin in the last months of Elisabeth’s miraculous pregnancy. Elder McConkie provides an additional possibility. He wrote, “Gabriel’s announcement about Elisabeth was unspoken counsel to Mary to go and receive comfort and help from her cousin, whom she no doubt loved and revered—the inference is that Mary’s mother was dead—and who, being herself with child in a miraculous manner, could speak peace to the young virgin’s heart as no other mortal could.” If Mary was motherless at the time of the Annunciation, conception, and birth of the Savior, we are left to afford her an even greater portion of praise for her courage and fortitude in the face of a potentially severe trial.
When Mary entered the home of Zacharias, her courage was rewarded by Elisabeth’s proclamation, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:42–43). In her own modest way, Mary humbly deflected this praise, exclaiming, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46–47). At a time when most would bask in adoration, Mary magnified the Lord.

Second, following a three-month stay with Elisabeth, Mary returned to her home in Nazareth. Upon her arrival, family members, friends, and particularly Joseph learned of Mary’s pregnancy. In a state of shock, Joseph desired to “put her away privily,” which meant to annul the betrothal as privately as possible (Matthew 1:19). To have her betrothed husband believe that she had been immoral when she had not would be a crushing burden to bear. Furthermore, had Joseph divorced Mary, it would have left her and her unborn child in the most disastrous of circumstances socially and economically, the weight of which would have been a trial of monumental proportions for any woman of the day.

As we have learned, an angel appeared to Joseph in a vision to explain Mary’s condition and to encourage him to take Mary to wife, which he did (see JST, Matthew 1:24). Even so, it was too late to curb the rumors that undoubtedly flew through the small village and beyond. As Joseph’s reaction indicates, Mary’s pregnancy was viewed initially as sordid and shameful. For many, this perception persisted for over three decades. For example, while teaching at the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles about six months before His Crucifixion, Jesus was challenged by a group of Pharisees who rejected His testimony that He was “the light of the world” and that true freedom could be obtained only by following Him, the Son of the Father (see John 8:12, 29, 31–32). His antagonists recoiled at this notion. Indeed, they claimed that they were of Abraham’s seed, were spiritually free, “and were never in bondage to any man” (John 8:33). Jesus responded by saying, “I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father” (John 8:38). The Pharisees answered, “Abraham is our father” (John 8:39). Jesus then responded, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father [the devil]” (John 8:39–41; see also John 8:44). Likely out of deep frustration at their inability to counter Jesus’s words, they hurled a vicious accusation: “We be not born of fornication” (John 8:41). This accusation...
may have been an allusion to spurious hearsay associated with Mary’s miracles conception over thirty years earlier. If rumors regarding the birth of Jesus were still in circulation so many years later and had spread from the obscure village of Nazareth to the power centers of Judea, we may reasonably conclude that Mary faced such rumors from her early adolescence through her mid-forties and probably beyond.

These two examples from Luke suggest that Mary endured bitter trials in her life. In the face of loneliness, confusion, potential ruin on all fronts, and ongoing slander, she never turned from her son and His message. Her example is a testimony of courageous discipleship in the face of opposition.

Obedience. On the eighth day after the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph were required to have Him circumcised and named, according to the law of Moses (see Leviticus 12:2). Forty days from the birth of Jesus, the law further dictated that He be presented to God at the temple. At this time, five shekels were paid as a symbolic redemption of the firstborn child (see Numbers 18:15–16; Exodus 13:2). Also, a lamb of the first year and a young pigeon or turtledove were to be offered for a burnt offering in behalf of Mary. This latter sacrifice was to ensure her ritual cleanliness before the Lord following childbirth (see Leviticus 12:4, 6–7). Luke recounts that Mary and Joseph obeyed these commandments (see Luke 2:21–24, 39), and it is through that obedience that spiritual strength and wisdom flowed into her at this time in her life.

As mentioned previously, in the early decades of the first century, Nazareth and poverty were virtually synonymous. Mary likely survived the first decade of her life with many deprivations, enjoying only bare sustenance. The Gospel of Luke suggests that in the days and weeks immediately following the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived a life of deep poverty. Given their origins in Nazareth, this is not surprising.

Luke records that when the days of Mary’s purification were accomplished, she came with Joseph to the temple to offer sacrifice according to the law. However, instead of offering a lamb and a pigeon or turtledove, she offered only a pair of turtledoves. Under the law, not offering a lamb on this occasion was an option reserved for only the poorest of Israelites, who could instead substitute two turtledoves (see Leviticus 12:8). When we consider that Mary and Joseph anticipated this offering for months, we are left to conclude that only the deepest poverty could keep them from offering a lamb and a turtledove. Nevertheless, her offering was accepted, and blessings began to flow immediately because of her obedience.
A just man named Simeon was moved upon by the Spirit to be in the temple on the day that Jesus was presented to God. Simeon beheld Mary with the Christ child and took Him into his arms, exclaiming, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:29–30). He then prophesied that Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles and the Israelites and that He would save many souls. To Mary he forewarned, “Yea, a spear shall pierce through him to the wounding of thine own soul also” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 2:35).

On the heels of Simeon was a righteous woman named Anna, whom Luke refers to as “a prophetess,” who served in the temple night and day. She also approached the Christ child and upon viewing the infant gave thanks to the Lord for allowing her to see the Messiah. She “spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). From Luke’s account we learn that strict obedience to God’s ordinances does not hinge upon temporal stability or social status. The genuine offerings of the impoverished are as valuable to God as the seemingly more extravagant offerings of the wealthy. Mary and Joseph were likely destitute, yet commitment to covenants overshadowed their poverty in the eyes of God. This deep devotion is a characteristic of all true disciples.

Furthermore, we learn that strict obedience will yield spiritual strength and added wisdom in the lives of disciples. Because of her obedience at a time when her poverty could have allowed shame or embarrassment to drive her away, Mary received prophetic confirmations of the divinity of her son through the words of Simeon and Anna. We may safely conclude that she took solace and strength from these confirming witnesses of Jesus’s role as the Light and Redeemer of the World. Also, Mary received added wisdom through Simeon’s forewarning of a spear passing through Jesus to the wounding of her soul. In other words, even though Jesus was the Son of God, Mary’s relationship with Him would be knit so closely that to wound Him would be to wound her. This insight was likely a comfort for an imperfect mother striving to rear a perfect son. Finally, these blessings emanated from Mary’s strict obedience to the law of God. We would do well to incorporate this characteristic of Mary’s discipleship into our lives.

Luke’s final reference to Mary is in the book of Acts, where she is found in company with the closest associates of the Savior. These disciples, men and women, were gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem, worshiping through prayer and supplication. In this scene, she is portrayed as the mother of Jesus but, more importantly, as a disciple of
Jesus and a member of His spiritual family (see Acts 1:14).

From Luke’s depiction of Mary, we learn a great deal about discipleship. True disciples of the Savior are humble, virtuous, courageous, and obedient. Luke describes Jesus’s life between the ages of twelve and thirty as a time wherein He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). It is apparent from Luke’s account that as Jesus progressed from adolescence to adulthood, He had a noble pattern of discipleship to rely on—that of His mother.

Like Mark and Luke, John paints Mary as a disciple progressing from the physical family of Jesus to His spiritual family. She is never referred to by her proper name; rather, John employs the appellations “mother of Jesus” (John 2:1, 2, 5; 19:25–26) and “woman” (John 2:4; 19:26). She appears only twice in the fourth Gospel—and then in contrasting fashion, acting in one way at the beginning of John’s Gospel and in a different way at the end.

For example, in John 2, Mary is at the wedding feast in Cana. Her concern for the shortfall of wine suggests that she was somehow associated with the hosts of the celebration. As the mother of the Son of God, she had abiding faith and an indisputable sense of Jesus’s divine powers. However, as this narrative illustrates, she had not yet developed a sensitivity for the timing of His mission. She imposed her membership in Jesus’s physical family to facilitate miraculous powers in a way that members of His spiritual family may not have done. Her request of Him to intervene was not evil or forbidden (after all, Jesus honored it), but it constituted a breach of timing, as His hour had not yet come (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 2:4).

The second time Mary appears in John’s Gospel is at the Crucifixion. We are safe to conclude that watching her Son die was a soul-wrenching experience beyond description. Undoubtedly, her immediate motherly instincts yearned to see Jesus employ His divine powers to save Himself and be united with her physical family once again. However, she had matured in her discipleship. Unlike at the wedding of Cana, Mary clearly understood that Jesus’s hour had come. With John by her side, she suppressed her motherly desires, allowing them to be eclipsed by deeper spiritual desires (see Mosiah 3:19).

At this moment, Jesus beheld His mother standing next to John. The Gospel of John then reads, “He saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:26–27). According to F. F. Bruce, Jesus gave John a custodial charge over Mary because “the brothers of Jesus were still too unsympathetic to him
to be entrusted with her care in this sad hour; in any case, they may not have been in Jerusalem at the time.”

To be sure, Mary’s immediate physical needs were of concern to Jesus. However, we must consider an additional possibility beyond these temporary needs that may further explain Jesus’s exchange with Mary and John. It is possible that Jesus was communicating to His mother that her faith and devotion as a disciple had progressed dramatically since the wedding at Cana. Indeed, she had reached a level of discipleship wherein she was invited to enjoy an ongoing association with John and to stand shoulder to shoulder with the most beloved of Jesus’s disciples. Again, given the status of Jewish women in Palestine in the first century, this proclamation is remarkable—if we are correct—and yet is a significant message of the Gospel of John. All people, old and young, bond and free, male and female, may progress in their discipleship to a point where they are ushered into the spiritual family of Christ. As it was with Mary the mother of Jesus, so it can be with us.

Mary Magdalene

While all four Evangelists include Mary Magdalene in their Gospels, only Luke mentions her in a narrative outside the events of the last week of Jesus’s life. Therefore, we turn to Luke for introductory insights to Mary and her role in the ministry of the Savior. Following Luke’s introductory ideas, we will turn our attention to Mary’s role during the Passion of Christ.

We have established the fact that Jesus was initiating a sociocultural reform in Jewish Palestine that brought previously unheard of freedom and mobility to some women of the day. From Luke we learn that Mary Magdalene, in company with a group of many women, embraced these freedoms and became an active disciple of Jesus, including traveling with Him during an extensive missionary tour of Galilee and later traveling with Him to Judea. Concerning the missionary travels of this band of female disciples, it has been written that “women did indeed leave their homes in Jewish Palestine, but only to travel to feasts, visit family, or attend to business, and this was only for a short duration. Women leaving behind family responsibilities would have been considered extremely atypical.” Another writer notes that it was considered not only atypical but also scandalous by Jews of the day. Furthermore, Mary must have been a charismatic leader, for it appears that she was the leader of this group of female disciples, being mentioned first in each listing of the most prominent members (see Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:41; Luke 8:2–3; Luke 24:10). Finally, as unlikely as it was
for Jewish women in first-century Palestine, Mary Magdalene and some of her peers were women of means who supported the ministry of Jesus with the resources at their disposal. Luke speaks of “certain women . . . Mary called Magdalene . . . and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance” (Luke 8:2–3; emphasis added). While specifics are few, clues to Mary’s mobility and apparent fiscal independence may be found in her name.

Magdala (meaning tower in Hebrew), usually identified as Tarichae (meaning salted fish) in Greek, was a town located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee about one mile north of Tiberias. As the Greek suggests, Magdala was a prominent fishing town. Salted fish were an important export in the Roman Empire, making Magdala a prosperous center of business. The appellation Magdalene is generally taken to mean that Mary came from Magdala. Since women of the day were usually known by a name that linked them to a man such as her husband, father, brother, or son (such as Joanna listed above), it is possible that Mary Magdalene was unattached. If this is the case, her financial security could have resulted from inheriting property in the area or from the proceeds of a Magdala business enterprise. Whatever the case, her commitment to Jesus’s ministry involved a significant financial element that was uncommon for a woman of that time period.

What moved Mary to be such a deeply devoted disciple of the Lord? Again we turn to Luke, who informs us that Mary had received a blessing and had been healed from infirmities inflicted by seven devils that had possessed her (see Luke 8:2). Details surrounding this healing are sparse, but Elder Talmage states that the priesthood blessing that healed Mary of physical and mental maladies was bestowed by Jesus Himself. Given her temporary possession by evil spirits, we may picture Mary Magdalene as a grievously incapacitated person during that time. She was likely in a state of great mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical instability, unable to function normally in society.

We are left to imagine the scene of her healing. Nevertheless, the scriptures capture a fairly uniform series of miraculous healings which we may draw upon as patterns. Jeni and Richard Holzapfel suggest that Jesus likely approached the incapacitated Mary in gentleness and love, assessed her condition, and felt compassion. He probably reached out to her, touched her, and pronounced words of priesthood blessing upon her. Healed and whole, she looked upon the Savior, and He lifted her up from her torment-torn bed or station and introduced her
to those in His company. Released from the pain of possession, her spirit soared, her charismatic personality was freed, her unflinching faith became unhindered, and her devotion was sealed. Elder Talmage explains that from that moment on, “Mary Magdalene became one of the closest friends Christ had among women; her devotion to Him as her Healer and as the One whom she adored as the Christ was unswerving.” Of her healing and subsequent discipleship, Elder McConkie wrote:

At some unrecorded time she was healed by Jesus from severe physical and mental maladies, and from her body the Master—of the seen and the unseen—cast out seven devils. Hers was no ordinary illness, and we cannot do other than to suppose that she underwent some great spiritual test—a personal Gethsemane, a personal temptation in the wilderness for forty days, as it were—which she overcame and rose above—all preparatory to the great mission and work she was destined to perform.

How often it is that the chosen and elect of God wrestle with physical, mental, and devilish infirmities as they cleanse and perfect their souls preparatory to the ministerial service they are called to render. . . . That Mary Magdalene passed whatever test a divine providence imposed upon her, we cannot doubt. And so we find her here, traveling with and ministering to the needs of the One who chose his intimates with perfect insight.

From Luke’s early depiction of Mary Magdalene, we learn that the gospel of Jesus Christ breaks down all barriers that otherwise may hinder discipleship. Social, cultural, economic, spiritual, emotional, and even mental obstacles may be overcome through Christ. His invitation to join Him is a genuine outreach to all peoples of the earth. Furthermore, Jesus’s proposition is not just to join His Church and then idly stand by but to fully embrace His message and lead others under His direction.

Finally, all four Evangelists indicate that Mary Magdalene was a crucial figure in events surrounding the Crucifixion, burial, and Resurrection of the Lord. We believe that the most important role she played in the narrative of these events was that of special witness. The following chart is indicative of her part in these events and how her involvement builds in her personal and public witness of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gospel</th>
<th>At Cross</th>
<th>At Burial</th>
<th>At Empty Tomb</th>
<th>Witness to the Apostles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>15:40–41</td>
<td>15:47</td>
<td>16:1–2</td>
<td>16:7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Of the four Gospel accounts, Luke alone does not place Mary by name at the Crucifixion. He does, however, report that the women who followed Jesus from Galilee witnessed the Crucifixion from “afar off” (Luke 24:49). As we have indicated, Mary was likely the leader of this group.

The first four columns (Gospel, At Cross, At Burial, At Empty Tomb) in the above chart are self-explanatory. The fifth column (Witness to the Apostles) captures Mary’s role as a witness and requires some explanation.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each place Mary at the empty tomb where she is greeted by two angelic messengers. John’s narrative depicts Mary being met near the tomb by the resurrected Lord Himself. In each case (Luke excepted), Mary is commanded to go and find Peter and his remaining brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and testify of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because she was sent by heavenly ministrants, Mary Magdalene became a witness to the Apostles. To be sure, Mary Magdalene was not an Apostle, but her divine selection to serve as the world’s first witness of the Resurrection of Christ is an honor of great magnitude. Indeed, as Holzapfel and Wayment explain, her testimony fulfilled the prophecy in the messianic Psalm that states, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee” (Psalm 22:22).

Once again, we learn from the Evangelists that the discipleship and testimony of faithful women matter deeply to God, who is not bound by the social and cultural norms established by mortals. Mary found freedom in her discipleship—freedom to lead, to follow, and to offer credible testimony to men in the highest circles of leadership in the Church. Like Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene was a spiritual pioneer of her day.

Mary of Bethany

This Mary comes from Bethany, a town located approximately one and a third miles east of Jerusalem. She lived with her sister, Martha, and brother, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. Mary was bold, fearless, and spiritually independent. Matthew and Mark do not mention Mary of Bethany in their testimonies. Luke and John, on the other hand, describe her as a faithful follower of Christ whose deep and endearing commitment to Him enable her to bravely shed traditional female roles.
of the day in favor of discipleship at the feet of the Master. We will examine two examples—one from Luke, the other from John—that illustrate Mary’s impressive commitment to Jesus and His teachings.

In Luke 10 we find Jesus in the home of Mary and Martha at Bethany.\(^59\) It seems apparent that Martha is the older of the two sisters because she “received him into her house” and assumed the primary responsibilities of the hostess (Luke 10:38).\(^60\) Mary, on the other hand, “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (Luke 10:39). This troubled Martha, who approached Jesus, asking that He intervene and encourage Mary to assist with the domestic duties of the home. Jesus answered by saying, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41–42).

This scene is singular in a variety of ways, but our focus will rest upon Mary.\(^61\) With the approval of Jesus, it appears that Mary had broken free from her socially mandated role by leaving her domestic duties to sit at the feet of Jesus and receive instruction. In Mary’s day, learning in general, let alone at the feet of a renowned teacher or rabbi, was a privilege reserved solely for men. However, to further understand the stark departure from the norm in this case, we must appreciate that the phrase “at Jesus’ feet” is likely a technical way of identifying an active and accepted disciple.\(^62\) Therefore, Luke communicates to the reader that discipleship overrules all other interests and social customs that may be brought to bear on an individual. Female discipleship was openly sanctioned by Jesus in this instance, and while Mary’s decision was unquestionably difficult, we learn from Jesus that such decisions will be judged by Jesus as “that good part” (Luke 10:42).

The four Gospels make it clear that Jesus made Bethany His headquarters during the last week of His life. Six days before the Passover, John informs us that Jesus was back in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, partaking of a meal with these close friends (see John 12).\(^63\) Again, Martha paid her devotion to Jesus by serving Him food. While Martha’s service was significant and was appreciated by Jesus, Mary was again seated as a disciple at Jesus’s feet and was prepared to show a higher devotion. John records that Mary took “a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment” (John 12:3).\(^64\) From Matthew we learn that she poured the ointment on Jesus’s head (see Matthew 26:7). Speaking of this anointing, Elder Talmage observed: “To anoint the head of a guest with ordinary oil was to do him honor; to anoint his feet also was to show unusual and
signal regard; but the anointing of head and feet with spikenard, and in such abundance, was an act of reverential homage rarely rendered even to kings. Mary’s act was an expression of adoration; it was the fragrant outwelling of a heart overflowing with worship and affection.65

There is one additional element of the story that is stunningly atypical. Mary unveiled her hair and used it to brush, caress, and gently massage the costly spikenard into Jesus’s feet.66 For a woman to uncover her hair in the company of anyone but her husband was an act of scandal in Mary’s day. The shock of her action likely resonated through the room and may have emboldened Judas Iscariot to rebuke Mary for her apparent excess (see John 12:4–5). Jesus immediately came to Mary’s defense, saying, “Let her alone: for she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 12:7).

What is the significance of Mary’s using her hair to gently spread the ointment on the Savior’s feet? A common practice of a slave owner in the first century was to use a slave’s hair to wipe excess oil or water off their hands at dinnertime. Therefore, it is possible on this occasion that Mary adopted the posture of a slave to manifest her absolute devotion to her Master and King. In a sense she was communicating what Mary, the mother of Jesus, said to Gabriel at the Annunciation—“Behold the handmaid of the Lord” (Luke 1:38).67

Mary’s act of anointing was inspired on at least two fronts: first, she likely fulfilled the prophetic Psalm, “thou anointest my head with oil” (Psalm 23:5); second, generally speaking, bodies were not anointed for burial until after death. Of this, JoAnn Seely writes: “Significantly, the anointing of Jesus took place while Jesus was alive, focusing on the richer meaning inherent in this act. The title Christ, or Messiah in Hebrew, means ‘anointed one,’ and Jesus came in fulfillment of Messianic prophecies.”68 This idea is further captured by Elder McConkie, who wrote: “So Mary of Bethany... as guided by the Spirit, poured costly spikenard from her alabaster box upon the head of Jesus, and also anointed his feet, so that, the next day, the ten thousands of Israel might acclaim him King and shout Hosanna to his name. We see Jesus thus anointed and acclaimed, heading a triumphal procession into the Holy City.”69

Luke and John allow us to view Mary of Bethany as a bold and noble disciple of Christ. She would not allow her discipleship to be hindered by traditional views of womanhood. Luke’s Mary chose to manifest her discipleship by learning at the feet of Jesus. Similarly, John’s Mary marked her devotion by serving at the feet of Jesus. In the
end, our discipleship will also be measured by our willingness to learn and serve at the Savior’s feet.

Our study will now turn to the remaining four women named Mary in the New Testament. There is far less text involving these final Marys. However, sufficient detail exists to provide significant and helpful clues about the lives of these women. Even so, their biographical sketches will be significantly less detailed than those of the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Bethany.

Mary, the Mother of James and Joses

As we discovered in our discussion of Mary Magdalene, a goodly number of women followed Jesus during His Galilean ministry and later witnessed His crucifixion. Mary, the mother of James and Joses, was one of these women (see Mark 15:40; James being the English form of the Hebew Jacob, and Joses being the Greek form of Joseph). Matthew initially refers to her as the mother of James and Joses but then simply calls her “the other Mary” (Matthew 27:61). She is not mentioned in John’s Gospel.

It is reasonable to conclude that she was a very close associate of Mary Magdalene. Like her, this Mary also enjoyed a great deal of freedom and financial independence when compared to most women of the day. Mark tells us that she gave her personal resources to support the travels and ministry of Jesus (see Mark 15:41). Details related to her age, the age of her children at the time of Jesus’s ministry, her husband, and her source of economic security are virtually unknown. Some suggest that Mary, the mother of James and Joses, is the same woman known as Mary of Cleophas (see John 19:25)—who will be described in the next section. While this is possible, we have not drawn this conclusion for three basic reasons. First, the text will not justify an absolute conclusion one way or the other in this case; second, Mary is a name used with such great frequency in first-century Jewish Palestine that it would be more reasonable to find more women, not fewer, with this name; and third, Matthew and Mark report that many women followed Jesus during His Galilean ministry and traveled with Him on His final journey to Judea (see Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41). Taking these facts together, we believe that in this instance, identifying Mary of James and Joses as Mary of Cleophas is overly harmonistic.

With that said, we know that Mary the mother of James and Joses traveled extensively with Jesus, was taught by Him, and likely witnessed His miraculous power on multiple occasions. She was with Jesus on His final trip to Jerusalem and was probably one of the “many women” who
witnessed the Crucifixion from “afar off” (Matthew 27:56). She observed the burial of Jesus, discovered the empty tomb with Mary Magdalene, and was greeted by angels who testified of Christ’s Resurrection early Sunday morning. According to Matthew’s account, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses were met by the resurrected Lord as they made their way out of the garden to share the glorious news with Peter and the rest of the Apostles (see Matthew 27:9–10).

Thus, while we lack many details about this Mary, we may safely conclude that she was a faithful woman who merited the trust and companionship of the Lord, that she was a close friend to Mary Magdalene, and that she was likely her peer in spirituality and charisma. She possessed a determination of soul sufficient to break from social norms of the day that would have viewed her ministry above and beyond her domestic obligations as scandalous. She gave freely of her substance to further Christ’s work and, most significantly, became one of the earliest witnesses of the Savior’s triumph over death.

**Mary of Cleophas**

John 19:25 is the only instance wherein Mary of Cleophas is mentioned by name in the New Testament. She is likely the wife of a man named Cleophas, and since she is grouped with those who are close friends or relatives of the Savior, we may conclude that she enjoyed an ongoing access to this inner circle of disciples as either a close friend or perhaps a relative. John places her at the Crucifixion with Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary’s sister, and Mary Magdalene. In their company she was a witness to the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that Jesus would experience thirst on the cross, which would be mockingly met with vinegar mingled with gall instead of water or wine (see Psalm 69:21; John 19:28–29). More importantly, she witnessed the concluding moments of Jesus’s mortal life as He proclaimed, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

While details surrounding the life of Mary of Cleophas are scant at best, John’s Gospel makes it clear that she was an important member of the group of women who ministered with and to Jesus. Again, the inclusion of a female witness to the Passion of Christ further illustrates the high regard the Evangelists had for faithful women of their day.

**Mary, the Mother of John Mark**

Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, introduces his readers to “Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark” (Acts 12:12). Her attachment by name to her prominent son, who was a missionary com-
panion to Paul and who authored the Gospel of Mark, coupled with the fact that her house belonged to her, suggests she was a widow. Luke lets us know that she was a woman of substantial means who lived in a rather lavish Jerusalem home including a courtyard, a wall with a gate, and at least one servant (see Acts 12:12–14).

It is also apparent from Luke’s writings that Mary’s home was a primary meeting place for the Jerusalem Saints following the Resurrection of Jesus. The events described in Acts 12 occur in AD 44, but her home was likely open to the Church much earlier. Indeed, she may have been in the “great company” of women from Jerusalem that bewailed and lamented Jesus as He made His way to Golgotha to be crucified. To this group, Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck” (Luke 23:28–29). It is also possible that she knew Jesus during His ministry, but the common suggestion that an upper room in her Jerusalem home was the place of the Last Supper is probably errant.

The year AD 44 was a time of great persecutions at the hands of Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. In Acts 12:2 we learn that Herod Agrippa murdered James (the brother of John), who served as a counselor to Peter in the First Presidency of the Church. Peter was also imprisoned at this time. To be sure, Mary understood the peril associated with opening her home for Christian worship services as she did in Acts 12. From this we conclude that Mary, the mother of John Mark, possessed hearty zeal and determination as a disciple of Christ. These traits allowed her to raise a son who would author one of the four Gospel accounts and help shelter the Church through her temporal wealth. Without question, Luke’s desire is to convey to his readers that women may contribute to Christianity through personal faith, courage, motherhood, and hospitable service.

Mary of Rome

Romans 16:1–16 is occasionally referred to as an ancient greeting card. Paul recommends, greets, or commends twenty-eight individuals—a number of them women and some of whom were apparently his relatives (see Romans 16:7, 11, 21). Mary of Rome is one of the twenty-eight. Indeed, Paul’s epistle to the Romans is entrusted for delivery to a woman named Phebe from Cenchrea (just outside Corinth), whom Paul also commissioned to conduct Church business
in Rome (see Romans 16:2). In the letter, Mary is commended by Paul because she “bestowed much labour on us” (Romans 16:6). She is mentioned in company with Priscilla, who was deemed by Paul, along with her husband Aquila, to be “helpers in Christ Jesus: [having] laid down their own necks [for me]” (Romans 16:3–4). All others listed are commended for faithfulness as servants and ministers in the Church and are worthy of a salute from the Church of Christ (see Romans 16:16). How she came to join the Church is unknown, and there is no agreement as to whether she is a Gentile or a Jewish convert to Christianity. Even so, through commendation and the company she keeps, it is obvious that Mary is a faithful, upstanding, and fruitful member of the Church in Rome.

The exact way in which Mary “bestowed much labour” is not clear. However, Lampe and Witherington suggest that given the newfound freedom enjoyed by women in the first-century Church, Mary’s service exceeded her domestic responsibilities and included ecclesiastical duties. The translation rendered in the New Revised Standard Version may suggest a more active role for Mary as a disciple. It reads: “Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you” (Romans 16:6; emphasis added). This rendering suggests that Mary of Rome was a spiritual caretaker in the city with her peers like Priscilla, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and her associate from Greece, Phebe (see Romans 16:1, 3, 12). Lampe suggests that Paul’s usage indicates that Mary was either a missionary or a woman of responsibility within the Roman congregation of Christians. Again, this is certainly plausible when we consider the rise of freedom for women in the Church and the high-profile way in which Paul singles out her contribution in Rome.

In this light, what may be the most fascinating aspect of Paul’s brief greeting to Mary of Rome is the spirit of open camaraderie and fellowship in which it was given. More to the point, Romans was written by Paul from Corinth in about AD 58—meaning that only thirty years had passed from the time Jesus instituted sweeping reforms regarding women as disciples and active participants in Christ’s spiritual family. Paul’s communication to the seventh Mary of the New Testament lets us know that Jesus’s preferred role for women as active and open disciples not only survived the initial decades of the Christian movement in Palestine but also spread with the expanding first-century Church.

Conclusion

Sorting out the seven women named Mary in the New Testament is more complicated than many students of the Bible anticipate. Even
so, our efforts lead us to know that an understanding of the historical and social context of women in first-century Palestine is critical. Within this context we learn that women of Jesus’s day generally experienced a status just above that of Gentiles and slaves. Without a connection to a husband or father, a woman was usually ostracized from society culturally, legally, and economically.

However, Jesus initiated a stunningly bold reform intended to invite and encourage the open participation of women in the Church as disciples and even leaders. Our survey provides an overview of how the four Evangelists and Paul portray these women and their roles in the early Church in light of the reforms Jesus instituted. Evidence of the changes associated with this reform is laced throughout the New Testament. Examples range from Mary Magdalene’s apparent leadership of female disciples, to Mary of Bethany choosing to learn at the feet of Jesus as His disciple and as a peer of her male contemporaries, to Mary the mother of John Mark hosting worship services in her Jerusalem home. Finally, our survey leads us to conclude that Jesus initiated these reforms in the face of opposing sociocultural pressures to ensure opportunities for women and all people to be more openly devoted to Him as disciples without hindrance. In the end, our careful survey of the seven women named Mary yields a rich and varied template for discipleship in the first century and today.

Supplementary Section: Charting the Seven Women Named Mary

The following chart provides a general concordance to the scriptural passages that name the seven Marys. In the case of Mary the mother of Jesus, she is so frequently (and exclusively in the Gospel of John) referred to as the mother of the Lord without being called Mary that these instances have been included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Seven Women Named Mary in the New Testament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matthew</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mary Magdalene</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

1. Some suggest there are six, not seven, women by the name of Mary in the New Testament. The question arises in part from the way one reads and interprets John 19:25, which states: “But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdala.” If the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is Mary the wife of Cleophas, then there are six women named Mary. However, this would mean that there are two daughters in the same family by the name of Mary. This is possible but unlikely. On the other hand, if the mother of Jesus is standing next to her sister (unnamed in John’s narrative) and another woman named Mary (of Cleophas), then there are seven. We are persuaded that the latter is true.

Similarly, if the mother of James and Joses is the same woman referred to by John as Mary of Cleophas, then there are six and not seven women named Mary in the New Testament. While this is a possibility, we are persuaded that drawing this conclusion would be overly harmonistic (see Matthew 27:55–56; Mark 15:40–41; see also Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], 120). We believe that the latter is true, leaving seven women by the name of Mary in the New Testament; see also F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 371.


8. Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 9. Witherington disagrees with the claim of Jeremias that a woman’s word was generally unacceptable. Rather, he argues that in practice, her word was accepted even in some doubtful instances.


13. Holzapfel and Holzapfel, Sisters at the Well, 22, 25; see also Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 13.

14. It is possible to underestimate the role of women based solely on their contributions to society as defined by men. Shanks notes that “given the central position of the family in the economy and social organization of [Judah], the influence of women on society as a whole is assumed to have been pervasive despite their invisibility in the public record” (see Hershel Shanks, ed., Ancient Israel [Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999], 164).

15. Holzapfel and Holzapfel, Sisters at the Well, 22, 25; see also Peter Connolly, Living at the Time of Jesus of Nazareth (Bnei Brak, Israel: Steimatzky, 1988), 53.


17. James E. Talmage, Jesus the Christ (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 475.

18. Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 484.


20. Brown, Mary and Elisabeth, 15–16. For Noah, see Moses 7:42; for Aaron, see JST, Genesis 50:35; for Moses, see JST, Genesis, 50:29, 34; 2 Nephi 3:9–10, 16–17; for John the Baptist, see Luke 1:13; for Joseph Smith, see JST, Genesis
50:33; 2 Nephi 3:15; for Jesus Christ, see 2 Nephi 10:3; 25:19; Mosiah 3:8.


22. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 86, 89; see also Brown, *Mary and Elisabeth*, 98. Another possibility is preserved by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* wherein is recorded an epistle by Julius Africanus (c. AD 160–240), who explained that “Eli and Jacob were brothers by the same mother. Eli dying childless, Jacob raised up seed to him, having Joseph, according to nature belongeth to himself, but by the law to Eli. Thus, Joseph was the son of both” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.7.16, in *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C. F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000).

23. Beyond the four Gospels, Paul is the first to identify Jesus as a literal descendant of David. His epistle to the Romans, written in the mid-first century, confirms this fact (see Romans 1:3) as well as other writings (see 2 Timothy 2:8); see also Wolfgang A. Bienert, “The Relatives of Jesus,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: James Clark, 1991), 1:471; Brown, *Mary and Elisabeth*, 38-39; Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 86.

24. Elder McConkie suggests that Mary told Joseph of her pregnancy prior to her departure from Nazareth to visit Elisabeth in Judea and that for almost three months he was tested to the extreme as to whether he should divorce Mary or complete the betrothal contract through a formal marriage ritual. Near the end of this three-month period, Gabriel appeared to Joseph in a dream, confirming Mary’s story and the divinity of her son, at which time Joseph sent for Mary to return home (see *Mortal Messiah*, 1:332–33).

Elder Talmage, on the other hand, suggests that Mary left for Judea and the home of Elisabeth without informing Joseph of her pregnancy. He learned that Mary was expecting a child when she returned to Nazareth three months later. Upon her arrival, she explained to Joseph the miraculous events that had transpired in her life, but he was not persuaded. Indeed, he was minded to divorce her as privately as possible. At this juncture, Gabriel appeared to Joseph in a dream and confirmed Mary’s report (see *Jesus the Christ*, 84–85).

Ultimately, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether Joseph knew of Mary’s pregnancy before she left Nazareth for Judea or upon her return. Certainly, both possibilities should be considered. We are persuaded that Joseph learned of Mary’s pregnancy upon her return to Nazareth. One thing is certain: Joseph came to know of Mary’s pregnancy during the betrothal period.

25. The prophecy that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem is found in Micah 5:2. The prophecy that Jesus would be taken to Egypt is found in Hosea 11:1. The prophecy that Jesus would live in Nazareth is not located in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Matthew 2:23 makes it clear that a prophecy of ancient date existed and was generally known to Matthew’s audience.


27. Some apocryphal sources suggest that Joseph was a widower when he married Mary and that these additional children were his by a previous wife. This tradition is questionable, as it emerges at a late date without justification from earlier writings or the Gospel narratives. Given long-standing Jewish customs associated with marriage, the likelihood of an eighteen- to twenty-year-old Joseph being married to a twelve-to fourteen-year-old Mary appears to be more probable.
(Brown, *Mary and Elisabeth*, 41; see also *Protevangelium of James* 9.2; “Extract from the Life of John according to Serapion,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:467).


30. It should also be taken into account that Mark 3:31–35 and Matthew 12:46–50 (both passages find Jesus teaching while His mother and brothers, but not Joseph, beckon for Him from outside) imply that Joseph is no longer alive. Christian tradition holds that Joseph died some time after Jesus was found teaching in the temple at age twelve and before His public ministry about eighteen years later. If this is indeed true, Mary was a widow during the critical years of the Savior’s ministry and would likely have been exposed to the previously mentioned cultural complexities associated with being a woman unattached to a husband. Even so, Mary embraced and then maintained discipleship in the spiritual family of Christ (see *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Joseph”; see also McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:281).


32. Economic conditions for Joseph and Mary may have changed somewhat following their flight to Egypt with Jesus and subsequent arrival in Nazareth. Joseph likely found work in Sepphoris, which lies about six kilometers (three to four miles) to the northwest of Nazareth. At the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, his son Herod Antipas inherited this region of the Galilee. He claimed Sepphoris, a city which had been destroyed by Roman forces some years earlier due to revolts, as his capital city and began a vigorous rebuilding project. He recruited local artisans to perform the labor. As Joseph and Mary brought Jesus out of hiding in Egypt, Joseph likely saw the work projects of Antipas as a source of work and income (see Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *The Holy Land* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 374–77).

33. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 82; see also Brown, *Mary and Elisabeth*, 46.


37. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 331. If Zacharias lived in Jerusalem, Luke would have undoubtedly identified his hometown as such. Rather, when his days of service in the temple were accomplished, “he departed to his own house” (Luke 1:23), suggesting a journey beyond the borders of the city. The reality was that fewer than one-fifth of the priests who served in the temple lived in Jerusalem.


39. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:319. The possibility of Mary being motherless is a real likelihood and deserves consideration. Holzapfel and Holzapfel note that an estimated “one in five pregnancies resulted in the death of the mother dur-
ing this period. One woman living during the first century was married at eleven, gave birth to six children, lost five of them, and died at twenty-seven” (Sisters at the Well, 24).

40. Brown, Mary and Elisabeth, 48; Brown, Birth of the Messiah, 124; Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 184n67. John 8:41 is also understood to be a statement regarding true descent from the seed of Abraham (see Bruce, The Gospel and Epistles of John, 199). Both interpretations deserve consideration.

41. Brown, Mary and Elisabeth, 56–58.

42. The Gospel and Epistles of John, 371. Furthermore, some suggest the possibility that the woman identified as Salome by Mark is the same as the mother of Zebedee’s children in Matthew’s account, and the unnamed sister of Mary at the cross in John 19:25 (see Holzapfel and Holzapfel, Sisters at the Well, 130; Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 521; McConkie, Mortal Messiah, 2:113; Kent P. Jackson, “The Crucifixion,” in From the Last Supper through the Resurrection, 329). If this is the case, John is Mary’s nephew, Jesus’s cousin, and possibly the closest male family member at the cross. At the present, however, it is impossible to determine this relationship beyond question, and so caution is advised (see Raymond E. Brown, The Death of the Messiah (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1017; Brown, Mary and Elisabeth, 77).

43. Support for this interpretation may be found in The Death of the Messiah, 2:1019–25; Ben Witherington III, Women in the Earliest Churches (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 175; Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 92–100; Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Mary, Mother of Jesus.” Not all scholars accept this symbolic interpretation. Rather, they see Jesus’s command to John as nothing more or less than a request to look after the temporal needs of Mary as a devoted son would. For support of this view, consult Bruce, The Gospel and Epistles of John, 371–72; Jackson, “The Crucifixion,” 332; “The Relatives of Jesus,” in New Testament Apocrypha, 1:482.

44. Holzapfel and Holzapfel, Sisters at the Well, 125.

45. Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 117. There exists a relatively large body of apocryphal writings that describe Mary Magdalene’s involvement as a leader and key figure in the early Church. Her prominent place in these writings more securely confirms her importance in the Church. However, given the socio-cultural background contained in this piece alone, we hope that readers do not feel a pressing need to explore these writings merely to “prove” that Mary’s role as a disciple was singular and groundbreaking. That conclusion may be easily and accurately drawn from the text of the New Testament.

46. Brown, The Death of the Messiah, 2:1154. In listing male disciples in a consistent order (such as Peter, James, and John), the Gospel writers suggest a hierarchy. It is likely that Mary Magdalene’s important role is also reflected in the frequency of her being listed first among the female disciples of Jesus.

47. Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 118.


49. Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Magdala.”

50. Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 264.

51. A tradition has circulated for centuries that the cause of Mary Magdalene’s afflictions was due to disobedience, particularly to the law of chastity. Furthermore, this traditional view has led some to conclude that Mary Magdalene is the sinful


55. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary finds Peter and his peers on her own without a command from the angels she met at the empty tomb. Given the consistency of a command in the other three accounts, it is likely that Luke simply did not include this detail in his Gospel.


58. Occasionally, Mary of Bethany is mistakenly identified as being Mary Magdalene. The synoptic Gospels provide ample evidence that Mary Magdalene hails from the Galilean city of Magdala. John provides sufficient proof that Mary of Bethany indeed comes from the Judean village of Bethany (see *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Mary”). This being the case, it is impossible for Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene to be the same person.

59. Luke does not name Bethany as the location of these events. However, the similarities between Luke 10 and John 11–12 allow for the conclusion to be drawn that Luke is describing the same people in the same town as John.


61. An additional example of the singularity of this scene is the fact that Martha is allowed to approach and dialogue with Jesus while He was talking with a group of male disciples. This was contrary to prevailing customs of the day and in this regard, Martha’s involvement in this story is atypical as that of Mary. Martha was showing her devotion to Jesus through service, whereas Mary showed her devotion through listening at the feet of Jesus (see Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 101). Catherine Corman Parry suggests that Martha’s service was completely acceptable to the Lord and that the gentle yet clear rebuke found in Luke 10:41–42 came only after Martha had harshly judged her sister. Parry writes: “But the rebuke would not have come had Martha not prompted it. The Lord did not go into the kitchen and tell Martha to stop cooking and come listen. Apparently he was content to let her serve him however she cared to, until she judged another person’s service... Martha’s self-importance expressed through her judgment of her sister, occasioned the Lord’s rebuke, not her busyness with the meal” (“Simon, I Have Somewhat to Say unto Thee’: Judgment and Condemnation in the Parables of Jesus,” in *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1991], 116).

Martha’s enthusiastic discipleship is also evident in John 11, where she runs to greet Jesus following the death of Lazarus. Her declarations of faith on this occasion are impressive (see John 11:20–27).
62. Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Mary.”
63. John provides the most complete account of Christ’s anointing. Matthew and Mark differ from John, indicating that the anointing occurred in the house of Simon the Leper two days before the Passover instead of John’s six. It is impossible to determine if Simon was the leper previously healed by Jesus and possibly the father of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. The accounts are too obscure. Elder McConkie comments on these obscurities thus: “The gospel authors seem to have drawn a reverent curtain over many of the details of Jesus’ private life and friendships, revealing only those things needed to give proper testimony of his ministry and mission” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:699).
64. Spikenard was imported from the mountains of India. It is a small perennial herb that grows at high altitudes. The entire plant was useful for its aromatic oils, which were used in cosmetics and perfumes (see Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Flora”).
65. Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 512.
66. A woman unveiled her hair in the Gospel narratives on only one other occasion (see Luke 7:37–38).
68. Jo Ann H. Seely, “From Bethany to Gethsemane,” in From the Last Supper through the Resurrection, 47.
70. For support of the view that Mary of James and Joses is not likely Mary of Cleophas, see Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 120. For support of the view that they may likely be the same person, see Brown, The Death of the Messiah, 2:1017; see also Bruce, The Gospel and Epistles of John, 371. It should also be noted that Eusebius records Hegesippus’s claim that Cleophas is the brother of Joseph, the husband of Mary (see Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3.11; 3.32; 435n5).
71. Her name is rendered Mary of Cleophas in the King James Version and the Rheims New Testament, but most translations render it Mary of Clopas (see John 19:25 in the following translations: New American Standard Bible, New Revised Standard Version, New International Version, and the New American Bible). The distinction is significant because the man named Cleophas in the King James Version of John 19:25 is sometimes identified to be the man on the road to Emmaus named Cleophas (see Luke 24:18). In reality, while the names resemble one another in spelling and form, they are not the same name, making it impossible for these two individuals to be the same person (see Richard Lloyd Anderson, Guide to the Life of Christ (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 122; see also Brown, Death of the Messiah, 2:1014).
72. Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Mary.”
74. Elder McConkie reports the aged speculation that the home of Mary of John Mark was the location of the upper room (see Mortal Messiah, 4:24). However, Brown has convincingly refuted this speculation (see Mary and Elisabeth, 111).
75. Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Mary.”
How to Ask Questions That Invite Revelation

Alan R. Maynes

Alan R. Maynes is the Church Educational System’s Utah East Area Director in Price, Utah.

“To ask and to answer questions is at the heart of all learning and teaching.” When gospel teachers create a desire to learn in the minds and hearts of their students, revelation can come more readily. This is especially true when the inquiring students are led to discover principles of the gospel that have power to change their lives.

Jesus the Master Teacher

As the supreme model of master teaching, Jesus asked great questions that stirred the souls of men. His questions caused listeners to think and created within them a desire to know truth. The four Gospels have over 125 different questions that Jesus used to teach, lift, and inspire. His questions caused the truths of the gospel to sink deep into the hearts and minds of His listeners. As you read through the following examples, ponder how great, and yet how simple, each question is. Notice how they invite revelation on the part of the learner.

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” (Matthew 5:13).

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?” (Matthew 5:46).


“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” (John 9:35).

“Lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15).
Jesus’s questions are not limited to His mortal ministry but encompass His premortal, mortal, and postmortal teachings. Looking at the questions He poses causes one to think, “Why does the Lord ask questions when He knows all of our thoughts?” The answer is because this method is one of the most effective ways to help people to think, to consider, and to believe. Elder Henry B. Eyring said, “Some questions invite inspiration. Great teachers ask those.” This article will explore the value of asking questions that invite revelation, present some thoughts on developing the talent of asking such questions, and finally, suggest methods of implementation in the classroom.

The Value of Asking Questions

Increasing student desire to learn. Questions can do many different things for students. In the first place, they can increase a student’s desire to learn. When a student desires to learn, most behavioral problems will disappear. Although many students do come with a desire to learn, some need to have their desire increased. Often, they go through the motions of learning, but their minds are elsewhere. Questions can cause them to engage in the learning process because they encourage students to think. And, as Elder Robert D. Hales taught, “We must require our students to think.” When a student ponders the doctrine, exciting things happen. This excitement is contagious and affects everything else that happens in a classroom.

Increasing student participation. “Asking good questions and directing effective discussions are primary ways to encourage . . . participation.” As the interest level increases and answers are explored, students find they are enjoying, as well as learning. This participation is brought about when the teacher adopts a student focus. For the gospel to reach down deep into their hearts and minds, students need to be truly interested in discovering eternal truths. Thought-provoking questions help bring this deeper level of participation.

Measuring student understanding. Asking great questions allows a teacher to measure a student’s understanding. As students answer, the teacher can assess what the class does or does not understand. “You gain this measure of your students by listening to their response to your questions.” A teacher can teach above or below the level of student knowledge, which, in either case, causes boredom. The response from students allows a teacher to make maximum use of the allotted time by clearly covering those items not yet understood. It also brings all the students to an understanding of the principles being taught. The law of witnesses is applied as students validate to each other the gospel truth being considered.
Inviting revelation into students’ lives. Elder Gene R. Cook taught, “The single greatest thing a teacher does is provide the environment in which people can have a spiritual experience.” Questions are essential in creating the necessary environment in the gospel classroom because they prepare the minds and hearts of the students. As the students participate, they authorize and therefore enable the Holy Ghost to teach them personally. This occurs because the students exercise agency, and as they seek learning by faith, eternal truths can be discovered and internalized.

Questions help create a climate for the Spirit to come and witness to the truth. The Holy Ghost, thus invited, teaches students personally and individually. No wonder the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, used questions so extensively to instruct and save the souls of men.

Developing the Talent of Asking Great Questions

The art of teaching. Some teaching talent comes as a gift, and some skills are acquired through instruction and practice. The appropriate use of great questions is at the center of effective teaching. It is worth every effort for a gospel teacher to develop this skill and hone it to perfection. Developing this skill requires asking the right questions during lesson preparation, not just lesson presentation.

Teacher preparation questions. This process begins with those questions a teacher asks while preparing a lesson, questions like “What was the author’s intent?” “What are the most essential principles or doctrines?” “What do I want my students to know from this scripture block?” “What are the redeeming, the converting, or the life-changing principles?” Asking the proper questions during preparation invites revelation for several reasons. First, teachers will be guided as they humbly seek answers by the power of the Holy Ghost. Second, as Elder Eyring taught, “If you teach doctrinal principles the Holy Ghost will come.”

For years the Brethren have told us to teach Church doctrine, to teach those things taught by the prophets and apostles. They have told us to be “cautious and restrained and totally orthodox in all matters of Church doctrine,” to teach “truth[s] of eternal significance,” and to avoid “fried froth” or “minutia and insignificant things.” President Boyd K. Packer taught, “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.” If teachers are looking for the nonessential, insignificant tidbits and facts or a “theological Twinkie,” that is what they will find. However, when teachers offer “students the benefit of a broader view,—looking for the intent of the inspired writer, the life-changing and converting principles that apply to the students—the Holy Ghost will accompany their study. Therefore, gospel teachers should “stay
in the heart of the mine where the real gold is.”

Then, the power of the Spirit promised to gospel teachers can distill upon them as a gift from heaven. This endowment of the Spirit comes because “the Holy Ghost’s job is to testify of truths of eternal significance.”

Being guided by the Spirit in what to teach is the place for a teacher to begin developing the ability to ask great questions. Looking for the important, the essential principles and doctrines will draw a teacher close to God. During His mortal ministry, Jesus focused His teachings on the basic principles of the gospel, and the Brethren likewise follow this pattern. Gospel teachers should do the same. When the teacher focuses on essential principles and doctrines, keeping the students in mind, the Holy Ghost is invited into the preparation process.

Searching questions. The Lord has given commandments to search the scriptures (see D&C 1:37; John 5:39; 3 Nephi 23:1; Joshua 1:8). Excitement comes into the life of one who discovers truths in the scriptures when guided by the Spirit. If a teacher can create that same experience for the students in the classroom, then learning is magnified many times over. That which students discover for themselves is much more life-changing and useful than that which they are told by someone else. One of the easiest ways to give the students this experience is to have them look for answers in the scriptures.

There are many ways to get students to search. Invite them to look for words, phrases, lists, meanings, additional information, understanding, principles, and doctrines. Avoid yes-no responses and obvious answers. Learning what to have students look for and how to invite them to look are skills that need careful consideration. Looking for the trivial or no-brainer information will not engage the mind. There will be times when a teacher will ask students to look for simple facts, but having them look for principles of truth, for understanding, and for application is more engaging. The invitation to search works best if it is given first, before the scripture is read. Students will get more out of their reading because they are looking for something and will have questions in their minds: Where is it? What is it? What does it mean? Some words that work well are “look for,” “search for,” “find,” “underline,” “mark,” and “identify.”

The clearer the invitation is, the more effective the search activity becomes. If there are several things being looked for, it helps to list the items on the board. Consider the following example: “Look for what is unusual about the money system in Alma 10–12” or “Identify how Amulek could discern Zeezrom’s thoughts in Alma 12:7.” This information is nice to know, but it is not life-changing. A more engaging approach would be: “Students, look in Alma 10:31 and find out who
was the foremost to accuse Amulek. Now look in Alma 15:12 and find out who is being baptized. Now let’s look for what Alma and Amulek taught that changed Zeezrom. Using the following verses, Alma 12:25, 26, 30, 32, 33, look for what Zeezrom was taught that changed his life.” Once students find the phrase “the plan of redemption,” then have them look for what we learn about the plan from Alma and Amulek’s teachings. This second example is more engaging because it focuses on that which is life-changing and converting. By searching this way, students can explore and discover principles of eternal significance that can be applied in their lives.

Analytical questions. Jesus knows the thoughts and intents of all our hearts, but seldom can teachers discern the thoughts of their students. When a student answers a question, a teacher can see a little better what students believe, understand, and feel. Parents, teachers, and leaders often say the youth know because they have been taught. I have been amazed when years later I find out my own children did not understand something as deeply and thoroughly as I would have hoped. Two-way communication is one of the best ways to measure student comprehension. In the classroom, this is accomplished by asking simple questions that encourage and allow students to participate. The following phrases can assist a teacher in writing analytical questions:

What did you find . . . ? What does it mean . . . ?
Why is that . . . ? Why do you think . . . ?
In your opinion . . . ? What evidence . . . ?
How do you think . . . ? What are some ways . . . ?
How is it that . . . ? What differences . . . ?

These questions are necessary to bring all to an understanding. Let us look again at Alma 11–12. After students have searched selected verses for Alma and Amulek’s teaching of the plan of redemption, a teacher could ask: What did you find? What do you think that means? If the students’ ideas are written on the board, the teacher can then ask: Which of those eternal truths listed on the board do you think affected Zeezrom the most? Why? Other questions could include: Why do you think Alma used the word redemption to describe the plan? How is it that an understanding of the plan of redemption causes change? These questions allow a teacher to see where the students are in their understanding. They help students to ponder the significance of what they are studying. Students are more able to internalize ideas as they are
thoroughly discussed and explored. Questions also give students the opportunity to share and teach. Asking this type of question requires a teacher who is willing to spend the time necessary to help all come to an understanding.

**Application questions.** Application questions or invitations are given to help students apply principles and doctrines in their own lives. In many classes, this invitation is not needed because the students have become so engaged and because understanding is so complete that the application happens spontaneously. If for some reason it does not, a simple question will suffice. Questions that begin with the following wording open the floodgates:

- What have you learned . . .?
- What difference would it make . . .?
- When have you felt . . .?
- What do you feel/think God wants . . .?
- Share a time or experience . . .?
- What does the Lord expect or desire . . .?

Application questions give students the opportunity to explain what they have learned and what they feel God would like them to do. They help to bridge the gap between the scriptural account and their lives today. This process helps students find answers to their problems in the scriptures. It also allows them to share heartfelt feelings, which have a tremendous impact on their classmates.

Consider again Alma 10–12. Ask students, “What have you learned today that would help you come closer to the Savior?” This question personalizes the lesson. It causes students to think and take a little inventory of their personal standing before God. Other questions could be: “When have you felt that the plan of redemption caused change in your own life?” “What do you feel God wants you to do to take full advantage of the plan of redemption?” Ask the students to ponder the question or even write their response before answering. Some might be invited to share. This process of asking a question that causes them to apply the principle takes eternal truths deep into the hearts and minds of the students.

**The path to student discovery.** When students accept invitations to think and learn, the vault of divine knowledge is discovered and opened. Revelation is invited into hearts and minds. This can happen to the teacher during preparation and to the students and teacher during the course of the lesson. This type of teaching is very enjoyable and engaging for the teacher. Students have an edifying experience because it is so engaging and Spirit directed. It sounds rather simple and easy, and
in many ways it is. It can also be difficult and challenging. It takes work, effort, and a lot of practice! The most important aspect of utilizing questions to teach is that students learn how to discover gospel truths for themselves. In order to teach this way, the teacher needs to be guided by the Spirit. The Spirit directs the what: the verses and principles that are to be searched. The Spirit also directs the how: the questions asked, when, to whom, and how students should be asked to respond.

Thus four types of questions are used: (1) preparation questions; (2) searching questions that invite students to look for information; (3) analytical questions that cause students to think and to evaluate; and (4) application questions that allow students to liken scriptures to themselves. These four types of questions have a logical sequence that leads to discovery.

Some fear that this logic and order in teaching is confining and lacks variety. I have had many teachers report that it is uncomfortable at first. Yet, after some practice, these same teachers report that it is liberating and inspiring. No longer do they ask the question, “What will I do tomorrow?” Instead, the teacher searches the assigned reading, prayerfully selecting what he or she feel will be the most beneficial to students. The teacher then prepares the questions that cause the students to search for information, analyze that information, and make application. There are many other things that a gospel teacher will do and use in the classroom, such as visuals, stories, role-plays, lectures, and so forth. However, these fundamental questions provide a great framework to build an engaging lesson.

I have visited hundreds of classrooms, and the effect of powerful questions is incredible. To sit in a class where students are willing, excited, and engaged and where they are participating, discovering, sharing, teaching, and even testifying is almost indescribable. The thoughts that enter my mind are: “Oh, if my son or daughter could be in this class!” “I wish every young person could have this experience.” “Every seminary and institute class should be like this.” The talent of questioning is worth any effort to develop so that revelation is invited into our classrooms and into the hearts and minds of each student and teacher.

Implementation

Because teaching is so habitual, we may seem to go on automatic pilot when we stand in front of the class. Teachers practice every day, several times a day. The abilities, strengths, and talents that have been developed over the years become very evident. The teachers’ weaknesses are also easily observed. Therefore, it takes great effort, along
with a plan of action, to change and improve. These changes must be sustained over a long enough period of time that the old habits and practices are replaced. Often it is uncomfortable when a new idea is tried. Many throw their hands in the air and say, “It does not fit my personality” or “That didn’t work for me.” An appreciation and understanding of the power that habits have in our lives can give a teacher the fortitude to choose to improve and to grow and develop in acquiring new teaching skills.

**How to improve.** The more a person treads a path, the firmer the path becomes. One key to changing our teaching style is to prepare a lesson plan with effective questions. If a teacher cannot write a good question in the quiet of the office, there is little chance a good question will come out when the teacher is standing before a class. The process of thinking and writing facilitates improvement and change. Three well-written questions for each lesson can do wonders. In fact, the process of writing great questions can affect the logic and thinking of the teacher so profoundly that all the questions a teacher asks begin to improve.

**How to teach with questions.** The teacher does not just stand up and ask one question after another; the experience is one of searching, discussing, discovering, sharing, and teaching. It is very edifying. The teacher needs to decide things like: Do we discuss together as a class, in groups, in pairs, or alone? Do I tell the story or background, or have students tell, or do we discover together?

We all know that friends and peers have a powerful effect in the students’ lives. Because of this high level of peer influence, when students share responses to questions and teach each other, it is especially effective. One of the best ways to get students to share and teach each other is to ask a question and have them respond to the class, to a group, or to a partner. For example, the answers to the questions “Which part of the plan do you think affected Zeezrom the most? Why?” could be shared and discussed as a class, in small groups, or in pairs. The question could also be asked this way: “Which part of the plan do you think the youth of the Church need to understand today?” As students share their answers, they are influencing each other—they are teaching each other. President Packer taught that “a testimony is to be found in the bearing of it!” Because of the students’ participation, the Spirit can witness to the individual that what he or she is saying is true. It can also witness to their partner, their group, or the entire class. This causes the students to feel more deeply about what they have learned and come to believe. They know that they know, and they feel that they know. Therefore, they come to realize that they do have a testimony and that it is good.
Conclusion

Increasing student participation does have a few challenges. The manner in which student comments are received affects the success of every question that is asked. A teacher needs to have high regard for the students. The students need to feel that their comments are valued and appreciated. Likewise, a teacher cannot accept all opinions as truth but must guide the class to the proper conclusions. It takes some practice and especially a love for students to graciously receive their answers and still maintain doctrinal purity. When the Spirit is present and effective questions are being explored, they will create and draw out thoughts, ideas, and additional questions from the students. A teacher should not be too rigid but should be open to guidance so that the Spirit is directing the teaching and learning.

Consider the following from Elder Cecil O. Samuelson: “I marvel each time I consider the wonderful way in which the Prophet Joseph Smith used proper questions not only to enhance his knowledge but also to enlarge his faith. . . . The question is not whether we should ask questions but rather, What are the questions we should be asking? My experience in science and medicine leads me to believe that real progress is almost always the result of asking the right questions.” My experience has also led me to believe that if we are to make real progress in taking the gospel deeper into the hearts and minds of the students, we need to be asking the “right questions,” even questions that invite revelation. If we are to fulfill the charge to “raise our sights” and have our students “become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us,” we must create a climate in which the Holy Ghost can come and teach with great power and change our hearts. Great questions are vital in bringing this to pass. I know that this skill can be acquired over time, through diligent effort and practice. Just as a marvelous flood of light came forth as the Prophet Joseph Smith asked great questions, so can that much-needed light flood into the hearts and minds of gospel teachers and students everywhere as we seek the Lord’s help in improving our ability to ask questions that invite revelation.

Notes


5. See Teaching the Gospel, 13.


24. Henry B. Eyring, “We Must Raise Our Sights,” address at the Church Educational System Conference, August 14, 2001 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 2.
“Written, That Ye Might Believe”: Literary Features of the Gospels

Julie M. Smith

Julie M. Smith is a volunteer institute instructor in Austin, Texas.

If you want to know what tomorrow’s weather will be, you don’t look in the phone book. If you misplace a friend’s phone number, you wouldn’t expect to find it included in the latest Harry Potter book. And no one turns to nineteenth-century Russian novels for a little light reading at the beach. We know what to expect from phone books and popular novels because they are the familiar products of our culture. But when it comes to texts written in distant times and places, we are not always so sure what to expect. This is certainly true of the Gospels, where many of the features common to ancient writing are quite foreign to us.

I will explore several literary features of the Gospels and offer practical suggestions for teaching them with the hope that increased familiarity with these writing techniques will improve understanding of the Gospels and lead to an increased testimony of Jesus Christ. As noted near the end of the Gospel of John, that text was “written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

Important Statements

The Gospel writers commonly use two statements that have rich meaning. To understand the first, we need to begin with Exodus 3. In verse 13, Moses asks God how he should respond when the people ask him what the name of God is. In verse 14, we read: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto
the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, “I am” was rendered with the Greek expression ἐγώ εἰμι. Because this wording was associated with the name of God, Jews in Jesus’s day regarded the expression as sacred and would have found a different way to express the idea “I am.”

When Jesus used this expression, He wasn’t simply saying “I am”—He was identifying Himself with the God of the Old Testament. Jesus used this language in several passages. Consider, for example, Luke 24:39, where Jesus is speaking to His disciples after the Resurrection: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I [ἐγώ εἰμι] myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” In this case, not only is Jesus presenting His resurrected body to the disciples, but also because of His use of “I am” (here translated “it is I”), He is identifying Himself with Jehovah. Similarly, the attempt to stone the Savior in John 8:59 (stoning was the penalty for blasphemy) is better understood when the reader realizes that Jesus testified that He is the God of the Old Testament in the preceding verse. Instructors should be aware of this usage so they can share its importance with their students. The passages in which it occurs take on a new level of meaning when we realize that Jesus Christ is teaching the people that He is, in fact, Jehovah.

One occurrence of ἐγώ εἰμι is worthy of special attention: Matthew 28:20, Jesus’s final words to His disciples in Matthew’s Gospel. In this case, the expression that was translated into English as “I am with you” is an ἐγώ εἰμι statement with a difference: in Greek, the words ἐγώ and εἰμι are separated, and the words for “with you” have been inserted in the middle. In other words, the Greek literally reads, “I with you am.” In these, His parting words to the faithful, Jesus emphasized the idea that His Resurrection makes possible the reconciliation of humanity with God. The very placement of the words teaches the reality of the Atonement.

A second noteworthy statement in the Gospels is usually translated as “verily, I say unto you” (sometimes “verily” is repeated). The Greek word translated as “verily” is amen, which is the origin of the English word amen. A modern translation of this usage might be “truly, truly I tell you.” He uses these words as a method of verbal underlining; that is, the statement indicates that whatever follows it is of particular importance. Seminary students are probably already familiar with the idea of verbal underlining if they have teachers who say, “You might want to write this down because it might be on the test.” Consequently, this is a statement that should be marked when it occurs because its use indicates that what comes next was deemed especially significant. This important statement occurs frequently as Jesus teaches.
There are several ways to teach students about “I am” and “verily” statements. Most simply, teachers could mark their scriptures ahead of time and then mention the statements to the class when discussing that passage. Alternatively, scripture chains could be made for either statement, with the student writing an explanatory note about the usage in the front of the scriptures (for example, “When Jesus uses the statement ‘I am,’ He is identifying Himself with the Jehovah of the Old Testament; see Matthew 14:27,” or “When Jesus says, ‘Verily, I say unto you,’ He is indicating that whatever is said next is especially important; see Matthew 5:18”) and then linking together all the instances of that statement with cross-references in the margins. An additional benefit of this approach is the opportunity it provides to look for patterns concerning what types of sayings are preceded by “verily I say unto you” and in what types of situations Jesus reveals Himself to be Jehovah.

Another option is for the teacher to explain the two statements to the students, give them a handout listing all of the relevant verses, and then perhaps allow time to mark all the passages.

**Paired Examples**

Frequently, stories or sayings about men and women are paired in the Gospels. This pattern is especially prominent in the Gospel of Luke, although it occurs to some extent in all four Gospels. One example of a paired saying is Luke 4:25–27: “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.”

In this case, Jesus uses an example involving a woman, the widow, and one involving a man, the leper, to make the same point: throughout the Old Testament, God showed mercy to those outside of Israel as well as to the Jewish people.

The Gospel of Luke frequently includes paired examples. For example, the angelic appearances to Zacharias and Mary form a pair (see Luke 1:5–20 and 1:26–38). Although these stories have many similarities, they also have some key differences, such as Zacharias’s and Mary’s responses to the angel. Often, we can gain new insights by comparing and contrasting paired stories.

Teachers may want to discuss with their classes the significance of this pattern. Points to bring out in the discussion might include the following: Jesus made sure that women knew they were included in the
gospel message; Luke, in writing about Jesus’s life, made it clear to the audience that women played important roles in Jesus’s ministry; and when we teach, we should be sure that all audience members feel that the message applies to them.

Several different methods might be used to teach seminary students about paired examples. The simplest way is for the teacher to mark them in advance and share them with the class in the course of discussing each passage. Should the teacher desire to present all the paired examples in one lesson, one way to do this would be to explain the concept of paired examples, give students a handout listing the pairs, and then allow time for the students to mark the pairs in their scriptures. If desired, students can play a concentration-type game afterward in which each concentration card has one scripture reference and the card that matches it has the other passage necessary to form the paired example. Another option is for the teacher to develop an activity sheet with one column listing half of the pair and a second scrambled column listing the other half. Students then use their scriptures (perhaps working with a partner) to find the match. Although many of the matches are quite easy to find, because they are adjacent in the scriptures, some, such as Luke 13:16 and 19:9, are much more difficult to locate. Another option is for the teacher to make a handout with three columns: a reference in the first column, a description in the middle column (such as “Jesus teaches that God’s mercy extends beyond the people of Israel”), and the matching reference in the third column. Then, the teacher cuts the chart into pieces and places them in an envelope. Students use their scriptures to reassemble the chart.

Intratextuality and Intertextuality

Intratextuality refers to the relationship between two stories within the same text; intertextuality considers the relationship between two stories in different texts (in this case, in different books of scripture).

Intratextuality is an important aspect of the scriptures to consider because of the constraints under which the Gospel writers labored. As John 21:25 indicates, there wouldn’t be room on earth for books enough to adequately present the life of Jesus Christ. Although perhaps not as difficult as writing on metal plates, writing the Gospels was still incredibly time-consuming, laborious, and expensive by modern standards. One of the ways that the writers pressed the most information into the least space was to be sure that not only would each passage convey an important lesson, but that additional meaning could
be gleaned when passages were read in light of other passages. By comparing and contrasting passages, we can learn more than we can from considering the passages in isolation.

In some cases, Jesus Himself suggests that intratextual reading can help us better understand the scriptures. For example, after the two feeding miracles, Jesus asked His disciples: “Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?” (Mark 8:18–21).

Clearly, Jesus intended for His disciples to compare the two feeding miracles (see Mark 6:33–44 and Mark 8:1–9) and to learn something that is not apparent in either story but becomes evident when we consider them side by side. Also, the numbers involved are apparently significant, perhaps symbolic. What a far cry from some scholars who claim that the presence of two feeding miracle stories in this Gospel is evidence of sloppy editing on Mark’s part and that the differing numbers in them suggest that no one got the story straight!

A second example where the arrangement of the stories can lead to greater insight is Mark 12:40–14:9, which has the following pattern:

1. The widow donates money to the temple (see Mark 12:40–44).
2. Jesus teaches about true discipleship in the last days (see Mark 13).
3. The woman anoints Jesus (see Mark 14:1–9).

In this case, we see real-life examples of Jesus’s teaching about discipleship manifested in the stories of the two women who act as true disciples.

Mark 5:25–34, which relates the story of the woman with the hemorrhage who was healed through touching Jesus’s hem, can also benefit from intratextual reading. The careful reader will recall Mark 3:10 (“For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues”) and Mark 6:56 (the sick “besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole”). These two verses from the same Gospel add new light to the story in chapter 5. They remind the reader that healing was not an uncommon event in Jesus’s ministry. Second, these verses encourage the reader to ponder why Mark chose to relate the incident in chapter 5 at length instead of developing the events related in 3:10 and 6:56. While there are many possible answers to this question, one worthy of exploration is that...
the healing in 5:25–34 teaches about more than Jesus’s healing power (which would have been accomplished by including any of these three events in the Gospel record). The careful reader would therefore look for what else is taught in this passage.

Intertextuality would have us ask of this passage: What other stories does this one remind me of? In this case, our horizon is a little broader; we want to consider similar stories in all of the scriptures, not just in the Gospel of Mark. One point of comparison could be other occasions when someone was raised from the dead (see 1 Kings 17:17–24 and 2 Kings 4:18–37). By studying these Old Testament stories, the reader might come to many different conclusions: (1) Jesus is affirming His status as a prophet by doing what Old Testament prophets did, (2) Jesus shows that He is more than a prophet because He is able to raise the dead immediately without the intermediary steps required by the Old Testament prophets (see 1 Kings 17:21 and 2 Kings 4:32–35), and (3) in all of these stories and, in fact, in all occasions in the scriptures when a resurrection or raising from the dead is described at any length, women are present.

Another way in which intertextual study of the Gospels can be useful is that it can help the reader realize that, on many occasions, Jesus’s words are either quotations of or allusions to Old Testament texts. Although the footnotes indicate some of these, they do not include all of them. For example, Jesus’s statement that “ye have the poor with you always” (Mark 14:7) has struck some readers as a recognition of the futility of trying to end poverty. However, Jesus’s statement does not exist in isolation; He is quoting Deuteronomy, where the context makes clear that, far from condoning poverty, Jesus expects His disciples to help those in need: “For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” (Deuteronomy 15:11). Similarly, the reader who notes that all of Jesus’s responses to Satan’s temptations (see Matthew 4:4, 7, and 10) are Old Testament quotations will realize that there are important lessons here. When read in their Old Testament context, the quotations that Jesus used have additional meaning (see especially Deuteronomy 8:1–10). The careful student will also learn the following from Jesus’s use of scriptures: when He used them, how He used them, and why He used them. Satan’s (mis)use of scripture in Matthew 4:6 (see Psalms 91:9–12) is also revealing.

In addition to quotations and allusions, intertextual reading considers events and stories. For example, when Jesus prepares for His entry into Jerusalem, He tells the disciples to “find a colt tied, whereon
never man sat; loose him, and bring him” (Mark 11:2). Why does He do this? One useful way to approach this question is to consider what significance His actions might have when viewed in light of the Old Testament background. Consider Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Clearly, Jesus’s actions fulfill prophecy and are meant as a testimony to the people that He is the promised Messiah. But why does it need to be an animal “whereon never man sat” (Mark 11:2)? Verses 32–34 in 1 Kings chapter 1 may provide a clue: “And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.”

In this case, the fact that Solomon is riding upon David’s mule indicates that he is the one chosen to be king. Therefore, when Jesus makes clear that He wants an animal with no previous rider, He is suggesting that His kingship is unique—it fits the pattern and procedure of Israel but at the same time transcends it. When the reader is unaware of the Old Testament background of the Gospels, Jesus’s words and actions can lose some of their meaning. Making an effort to read the Gospels with the Old Testament in mind can remedy this problem.

When it comes to teaching seminary students about intratextual and intertextual reading techniques, there is no magic formula. However, periodically asking students, “Does this remind you of any Old Testament stories (or other events in this Gospel)?” may yield rich results. Of course, the footnotes are an invaluable reference, and students should actively use them. But not all relevant cross-references are found in the footnotes. One way to explore connections on your own is to use the electronic scriptures at www.lds.org. By typing in some of the main words from a phrase or story, we might find connections to other texts. For intratextual readings, it may be useful to keep a chart in the classroom containing brief descriptions of the stories that have already been studied. Then, students can scan the chart and consider whether the story currently being studied has any interesting parallels to the others. When intratextual or intertextual parallels are found, students will benefit from noting the cross-reference in their scriptures to aid them in future study.
Reading for Details

A final technique is to look closely at the details in a text. To demonstrate how this may be done and what insights can be gained from the process, John 4 will be used as an example. In our examination of John 4, we’ll also rely on intertextual and intratextual reading.

Consider verse 4, which describes Jesus’s travels: “And he must needs go through Samaria.” At this point, a careful reader would consult a map and notice that when traveling from Judea to Galilee (see verse 3), a traveler does not necessarily have to go through Samaria. Consequently, the detail-oriented reader realizes that verse 4 describes not a geographical necessity but a theological one. This leads to a useful question to ponder while reading the rest of this chapter: Why did Jesus go to Samaria?

The next three verses establish that the story involves a man, a woman, and a well. If we consider what Old Testament stories had similar settings, we find several: Isaac (technically, his servant) and Rebekah (see Genesis 24:10–28), Jacob and Rachel (see Genesis 29:1–11), and Moses and Zipporah (see Exodus 2:15–21). Notice that all of these involve couples who will later marry. Of course, Jesus does not marry the woman at the well, but this setting suggests that she will enter into covenants with Him, which the scriptures sometimes symbolize as a marriage between the Lord and His people: “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion” (Jeremiah 3:14). One other detail helps establish a setting that is more than just a setting: John 4:6 notes that it was the sixth hour (that is, around noon). Why include this detail? This would have been an unusual time to draw water; most women would have completed this chore earlier in the day, both to avoid the heat and to have water for their households throughout the morning. We have a hint that this woman may be avoiding other people. The careful reader will recall that in the previous chapter, Nicodemus came to Jesus “by night” (John 3:2). We could consider the following: In what ways might the woman’s and Nicodemus’s approaches to Jesus be understood symbolically? In what ways are they different? What do they have in common?

As the above discussion of John 4:4–6 shows, a focus on the details allows the reader to interact with the text in a new way. As questions about details are considered, the student has an opportunity to ponder, and it is this pondering that creates an opportunity for the Spirit to whisper truth. Another benefit of studying details in the scriptures...
is that we’ll never run out of them; scripture study can always be new and interesting and never dull or repetitious.

Although a detailed study of John 4 is well beyond the scope of this article, one more detail should not escape the reader’s attention. Consider John 4:28. Remember that, at the beginning of the story, the woman’s sole motivation was to fill her waterpot. But by the end, because of her conversation with Jesus Christ, she has undergone a transformation substantial enough that she forgets her waterpot. She is so eager to share with others the truths that she has learned that her daily chores pale in significance. In the subtly humorous detail of the abandoned waterpot, we find evidence of her spiritual awakening and her new priorities.

Again, there is no simple way to get seminary students to read for details, but the following ideas may help teachers accomplish that goal. Direct students to consider the details before the passage is read: “As we read verses 5–7, please focus your attention on the details in this passage.” Ask direct questions: “Why do you think Matthew included this detail in the record?” “Do you think it might be symbolic that Nicodemus met Jesus at night?” “Why do you think John mentions that Jesus had to go through Samaria?” As teachers do this, they establish the habit of attention to detail that will become ingrained in their students. Although teachers don’t want to get bogged down with details, they should periodically consider focusing on the details in a passage so that students will internalize this reading approach and be able to use it in their own scripture study.

The CES Current Teaching Emphasis states that “we are to help students understand the scriptures and the words of the prophets, identify and understand the doctrines and principles found therein, and apply them in their lives in ways that lead to personal conversion.” The teaching techniques described in this article are designed to help students meet the first third of that goal. It is crucial that teachers remember to incorporate the identification of doctrine and personal application in each lesson.

As written documents, the Gospels contain important literary features. Paying attention to details, important phrases, and paired examples, as well as reading intratextually and intertextually, will help us to better comprehend the message of the Gospels, which, in turn, means that we can gain a better understanding of Jesus Christ and His earthly ministry.
Notes:

James E. Faulconer and Reed A. Russell provided helpful feedback on an early draft of this article.

1. Occurrences of *ego eimi* are Matthew 14:27, 28:20; Mark 6:50, 14:62; Luke 22:70, 24:39; John 4:26; 6:20, 35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1, 5; and 18:5, 6, and 8. (Note that *ego eimi* is not always translated into English as “I am.”)


4. Paradoxically, the younger and the more inexperienced students are with the scriptures, the more they seem to be able to identify intertextual connections. In several cases, my six-year-old son has surprised me by pointing out similarities that I hadn’t previously noticed between two stories. It may be that lack of familiarity with the details makes the larger pattern of the story more obvious.

A Viewpoint on the Supposedly Lost Gospel Q

Thomas A. Wayment

Thomas A. Wayment is an assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

Over the past few years, it has become increasingly obvious that apathy toward the issues raised by biblical scholars is costing believing christians a great deal more than we may have anticipated. Of major concern for scholars the past two centuries is the issue of the compositional order of the New Testament and the literary relationship among Matthew, Mark, and Luke—commonly referred to as the synoptic Gospels. The theories presented by scholars are, in some fields of New Testament studies, becoming more controversial, more hostile to faith, and more reform oriented. One such field of study considers the issue now known as the “synoptic problem.” The “synoptic problem” refers to the discussion surrounding how the authors of the synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—used and referred to one another in the process of writing their own accounts.

Scholarship is quite polarized over how to resolve this issue. Those who advocate a “two-document hypothesis” have heavily influenced the debate among scholars concerning how the Gospels were written and what sources were used in their composition.¹ Their theory is that the Gospel of Mark was the earliest to be written and that it was subsequently used and borrowed from during the composition of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This theory can adequately explain how the synoptic Gospels contain much of the same material, but there are also significant portions of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke that are not found in Mark. After looking at those passages where Matthew and Luke contain the same account or saying, for which there is no corresponding
account in Mark, scholars concluded that Matthew and Luke borrowed from a second earlier source that has been dubbed “Q,” from the German _Quelle_ or “source,” and hence the idea of two source documents, Mark and Q, from which the “two-document hypothesis” derives its name. The following visual depicts the “borrowing” as reflected in the two-document hypothesis:

_The Two-Document Hypothesis_

\[ \text{Mark} \rightarrow Q \rightarrow \text{Matthew} \]
\[ \downarrow \]
\[ \text{Luke} \leftarrow \text{Mark} \]

(arrow show direction of borrowing)

The compositional theory proposed by many scholars of the New Testament is that Matthew and Luke each independently borrowed a significant amount of their text and order from Mark and that, interspersed between their borrowings from Mark, each evangelist added passages from the theoretical document Q. Scholars determine Q passages by comparing those instances where Matthew and Luke have a verbatim or nearly verbatim parallel between them that is not recorded in Mark. According to the theory, Q can be determined only when Matthew and Luke have copied from it directly and have not altered the saying substantially.

A discussion of Q may appear to many to be merely an academic enterprise, the work of scholars, and to go beyond the realm of faithful scripture searching. In its initial stages, Q was nearly a purely academic enterprise. Today, however, conclusions drawn from it are influencing the faith of thousands and altering the way the New Testament is taught and preached throughout the world. As Latter-day Saints, we have been relatively unaware of this heated discussion among scholars and have often viewed their proceedings as suspicious or beyond the realm of interest. We are rapidly losing ground in this discussion, and, without some opposing influence, scholars may soon declare the two-document hypothesis a proven fact. The issues that this article seeks to address are whether the two-document hypothesis conflicts with Latter-day Saint viewpoints of the New Testament and what ramifications the study of Q could have, if accepted, on our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth.

A Defense of Q?

The idea that the Bible may be incomplete can immediately be defended on the grounds of the eighth Article of Faith, which states,
“We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” The Latter-day Saint belief that the Bible is not infallible and that errors have crept in because of misinformed or intentionally erroneous translations would facilitate our agreement with biblical scholars who likewise argue that the Bible has been corrupted during the process of transmission. The Q theory, however, is much more than the simple corruption of scripture and mistranslation of texts. Q theorists suggest that the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke knowingly altered and enhanced the teachings they received from Q and Mark. The work of the Evangelists, they propose, as well as their various focal points, can be determined by how the Evangelists changed the materials they received and what materials they added to Mark and Q.

In its most basic form, Q studies have nothing to do with mistranslation but instead lead into a discussion of the tendencies of each author and their different treatments of received traditions. Such a use of biblical traditions could be justified using the model of the Book of Mormon and the way in which Mormon and later Moroni edited the traditions from the large plates of Nephi and the book of Ether. We cannot entirely object to what Q scholars are saying about the way in which Matthew and Luke have handled the traditions that were passed on to them; in fact, we would have to learn to accept the idea that the authors of Matthew and Luke were second-generation Christians who edited the texts of the previous generation and were not eyewitnesses themselves.

Q may also be defended on the grounds that it contains the words of Jesus in their earliest form, and its composition therefore reveals an interest by the earliest disciples of Jesus to record accurately His sayings. One would expect, from a logical standpoint, that the disciples of any great religious leader would collect and gather the sayings of their master immediately upon his death or even during his lifetime. It could be argued that Q represents just such a document. The difficulty with this thesis, however, is that the inner logic of the theoretical Q document would suggest otherwise. Using only those passages contained in Q, scholars have proposed that the Jesus of Q was a wandering teacher of wisdom who did little to cultivate the master-disciple relationship. The proposed Jesus of Q also had no expectations of a future church or kingdom on the earth and did little if anything to train His disciples for His impending death. Therefore, by the logic of Q, could we really suggest that Jesus had a devout group of followers who worshipped Him and who would have been careful to preserve His teachings? The contents of Q suggest that Jesus had very few personal disciples, and
therefore it would be difficult using Q alone to suggest that anyone would be greatly interested in collecting the sayings of Jesus and preserving His name and authority within that collection.

Challenges to Q—The Sermon to the Nephites

One of the founding principles in determining Q and which author of the New Testament most accurately preserved its contents is the belief that the Sermon on the Mount was a composition by the author of the Gospel of Matthew. As is well known among readers of the New Testament, Matthew and Luke contain two very similar sermons: the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7) and the Sermon on the Plain (see Luke 6:20–49). The large overlap in wording and order of passages has led to the conclusion that many of the passages of the Sermon on the Mount or Plain were originally contained in Q. By Q’s definition, this would be a logical conclusion. The author of the Gospel of Matthew, in this way of thinking, is, in reality, the author of the Sermon on the Mount and qualifies for the honor of having compiled one of the most memorable discourses in history.

This view, however, faces a considerable challenge in the Book of Mormon through Jesus’s Sermon to the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 12–14). Scholars argue that the Sermon on the Mount is a composition from the late 70s AD by a second-generation Christian believer. They maintain that Q contained no distinctly organized sermon and that perhaps the Gospel of Luke has given us the most accurate depiction of what Q contained relating to this sermon. The parallel Sermon to the Nephites, however, was given shortly after the death of Jesus. The similarity of wording suggests that the Sermon on the Mount was composed no later than a few years after Christ’s death, not forty years later as Q scholars maintain. Latter-day Saints also believe that the composition of the Sermon on the Mount was made during Jesus’s own lifetime and that the sermon was actually delivered to an audience of His disciples, although this thinking cannot be absolutely “proven” in a scientific sense.

Evangelists as Editors and Authors

Q in its simplest form raises serious doubts concerning our traditional understanding of who the Evangelists were and what their work consisted of. We would not be surprised to learn their views that the disciple Matthew did not personally pen the Gospel of Matthew or that the Gospel of Luke was penned by another one of Paul’s traveling companions whose name has now been lost, but we would be surprised to
read that the authors of the New Testament had complete freedom in composing their books and in altering the words of Jesus. Those who advocate Q claim that the earliest historical collection of Jesus’s life was devoid of narrative, told no miracles, and contained only short random sayings from Jesus Himself. Q scholars propose that the Evangelists used this collection of sayings, or *logia*, liberally and that neither Luke nor Matthew showed any great respect for its order, or wording, or tried to transmit it in its entirety. Theoretically, Matthew and Luke used this source freely in their composition and created narrative settings of their own accord, independently inserting passages from Q into their framework, which they had adapted from Mark. What type of record was this that contained the words of Jesus but for which a second-generation Christian author had little, if any, respect for as a valid representation of the life of Jesus? Scholars are arguing with more vigor that the Jesus of Q is the Jesus of history and that the Jesus of the Gospels is the Jesus created by the Church. If the Q theory were indeed valid, then this viewpoint would need to be seriously considered.

**An Evolutionary Model**

The theory of Q works on an evolutionary model of history, in which the most primitive and concise records were the earliest, and then later authors and editors expanded the history to adapt it for their own circumstances. Q and Mark, the most “primitive” of the Gospels, were the first to be written in this sequence, and the longer Gospels of Matthew and Luke are seen as the final product in the evolution of the Gospel genre. Scholars have argued that Matthew and Luke went through various stages or recensions and that the version we now have is the one that was finally accepted by the church. Such an understanding of textual history may be acceptable to some scholars, but there is an entire stratum of textual critics who defend the position that scribes, especially in the earliest period of textual transmission, tended to delete portions of text rather than expand and enhance. The normal work of the scribe in correcting the text and harmonizing it to the other New Testament texts is easily identifiable through a study of the textual variants of the New Testament. The opposite, namely the removal of large portions of text, is also easily identifiable in the study of the New Testament. A few examples may suffice:

1. In John 5:2, Jesus performs a miracle at the pool of Bethesda in the city of Jerusalem, but John 6:1 states that “after these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee,” a distance of nearly two hundred miles.
temporal connective “after” suggests that after Jesus did X he did Y, but
the two scenes are very different from one another, and it appears that
the intervening explanatory text or travel narrative has been removed.

2. In Acts 20:35, we have the statement, “Remember the words of
the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive,”
yet this saying does not appear in any of the canonical Gospels.

3. From an even earlier period, Paul taught the Thessalonian Saints
“by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the
coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the
Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice
of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ
shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up
together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and
so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17). The
Apostle Paul stated in the preceding text that these words originated
with the Lord Jesus Christ, yet they are nowhere to be found in the

The evidence of the Book of Mormon teaches us that scripture
also undergoes corruption through the process of deletions. In Nephi’s
inspired account, he stated that “the book proceeded forth from the
mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew
it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord. . . . Wherefore, these
things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi
13:24–25). Although not by any means an absolute statement on all
textual variation in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon testifies
that the text of the Bible would suffer from deletions but does not men-
tion the proposed expansion of the text as proposed by Q scholars. The
transmission process of the Book of Mormon also suggests that inspired
records are created through inspired editorial condensation and that the
longer text of the Book of Mormon was the earliest. Luke may have had
just such a situation in mind when he states, “Forasmuch as many have
taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which
are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1). Like Mormon, Luke
may be giving us an inspired and edited condensation of the traditions
that he has received.” The evolutionary model should not confine us into
thinking that all texts start out primitive and develop over time through
the process of uninspired additions.

*Ipsissima Vox Iesou*—The Very Words of Jesus

An issue that needs to be raised is what relationship the proposed Q
document has to the life and teachings of the historical Jesus. Scholars
fall into several camps on this issue, with essentially every nuance in between being advocated. The most immediate reaction to the evidence presented by those expounding the two-document hypothesis is that the words of Q most accurately reflect the words of Jesus. This is a logical corollary—if Q is proven to be correct—as Q bears greater chronological proximity to the life of Jesus. We should expect that the earliest accounts would have had access to eyewitness accounts and to those who had been in direct contact with Jesus Himself. If Q represents the most correct collection of the words of Jesus, then we should likely view the later Gospel compilations as confusions of the truth. The editors of Q, namely Matthew and Luke, would, therefore, be the generation of Christians who modified and altered the teachings of Jesus. Almost all additions to Q, unless a historically valid claim can be made for independent reliability, could be understood as alterations of the truth.

This way of thinking leads us to ask ourselves whether our reliance upon the New Testament Gospels is a matter of tradition or whether our reliance upon them as accurate accounts of the life of Jesus is based upon their truthful representation of the facts. Nearly everywhere, Christians today are bristling at the suggestion of such a question, and Q scholars are forcing a decision on the issue. Unfortunately, as believing Christians we are losing the battle in this area, and our silence on this issue is permitting those who would construe things otherwise to gain precedence. For example, a recently aired special on the life of Jesus by Peter Jennings entitled *The Search for Jesus* retold the life of Jesus based on the work of Q scholars. Jennings presented for the first time on national television a documentary on Jesus’s life using Q as though it were in many instances a proven fact.

We will never be able to “prove” the historical accuracy of the New Testament, but, as a corollary, it will never be disproved either unless substantial firsthand, eyewitness accounts are discovered. We might rely on the eighth Article of Faith to affirm our belief in the Bible or the testimonies given in the Book of Mormon, but these witnesses as well as those of the living prophets will never suffice to yield scientific proof. We need to be reminded that the New Testament is not without errors, and those who propose the two-document hypothesis need to be reminded that their proposal is at this stage a theory and that while Q scholars are attempting to reconstruct Christianity upon that new theory, it will always remain simply that, a theory with significant detractors. Faith is not a science, and theory is not an absolute.
Separate and Competing Christianities

The “discovery” of Q has led to a belief that the Gospels represent types or communities of Christian believers and that those communities were in conversation and discourse with one another—for example, in the secondary literature anyone can read about Matthean, Markan, Lukan, and especially Johannine Christianity. Q scholars have proposed that the Gospels represent the work of these communities, and their various alterations to received traditions, namely Q and Mark, help manifest their doctrinal leanings and tendencies. Matthean Christianity is more oriented, for example, to issues of ritual purity, whereas the Gospel of Luke has an overt concern for poverty and the economic poor. This view obliterates the standpoint that all the authors of the New Testament were working within and toward the establishment of the Church left behind in the wake of Jesus’s death. The Church, many believe, developed over time and was the product of a dominant group that marginalized its opponents. Scholars have pointed to the conclusion that various early Christian heretical groups could be viewed as more “orthodox” or more historically correct in their understanding of Jesus than those who ultimately triumphed and wrote the New Testament.

There are some points that we should consider before joining these people on the bandwagon. New Testament authors and modern prophets have taught concerning the Apostasy that enveloped the early church. Although we cannot fix the moment of the beginning of the Apostasy, we have traditionally ascribed it to the postapostolic era after the death of the first Quorum of Twelve Apostles. We believe that the Church was organized in the days of the Apostles and that Peter and the other eleven Apostles administered to the needs of the growing Church. Q would radically alter our portrait of the early Church and undermine our belief that Jesus left behind an organized religious community.

Those who advocate that Christian origins should be thus reconstructed often fail to notice that their proposed reconstruction is based on circular reasoning. All passages wherein Jesus overtly teaches, trains, and prepares the Apostles for His upcoming death either derive from Mark or do not originate in Q. Therefore, scholars dismiss those passages that have Church organization, or teachings concerning the future Church as late and secondary, but the criteria established by those scholars is the very reason that such evidence has been removed. Their judgment is circular at best because we cannot establish a theoretical document, one in which we have determined its contents, and then make negative statements regarding other traditions based on
what was supposedly not in that document. There is no scientific way to verify what was not in Q, and, in fact, if only one author quoted from Q, our methods of detecting Q passages would prove useless because Q passages are determined by verbal similarity between Matthew and Luke. If Luke or Matthew quoted independently from Q, we would never know it. Therefore, many of those passages that speak of Church organization, the training of the Twelve, and what the disciples should do after Jesus’s death could derive from Q if they could be shown to not derive from Mark. In reality, only sixty-eight passages are ascribed to Q, but the number could be much greater since Q can be detected only when Matthew and Luke both quote the same passage nearly verbatim.\textsuperscript{12}

**Paul**

Although Paul might first appear to be beyond a discussion of Q, he is not. Paul is our earliest author in the New Testament, and he wrote contemporaneously with the theoretical Q. Therefore, these two sources for the study of the New Testament should be viewed on equal footing. In the era after the “discovery” of Q, scholars began to take a second look at Paul and his familiarity with the traditions of Jesus’s life. As is well known, Paul tells us almost nothing of Jesus’s ministry or of what Jesus taught.\textsuperscript{13}

Two views of this phenomenon have emerged; either Paul did not tell of the traditions of Jesus’s life because they were so familiar to his audience or he was unfamiliar with them because they had not been established by his day. Although not unanimously, Q scholars tend to favor the latter possibility because it lends tacit support to their theory that Christianity was being invented and shaped by the events of the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Paul, in this way of thinking, was a Christian maverick who saw things quite differently from the authors of the synoptic traditions and who was largely responsible for imposing on the early Christian communities a sense of church and central organization.

**Conclusion**

Q has become many things in our day, probably most of them unanticipated by its original proponents. In reading the early literature on Q, scholars can sense of open debate and concern to establish whether the authors of Matthew and Luke had access to earlier written or oral traditions. The first generation of Q scholars debated whether Q was even a written tradition. Unfortunately, Q has become something unwieldy—a beast with a spirit of its own. Q scholars want to
alter our understanding of who Jesus was and present to us a Jesus who did no miracles, did not anticipate His death, did not understand He was the Messiah, and did not leave behind an organized church. The Jesus of Q is essentially a scholar’s Jesus who wandered the countryside and taught using conventional wisdom. He had no power to save Himself, and He had no power to save others. Scholars call this the Jesus of history, whereas we worship the Jesus of faith. The following chart shows the directions of borrowing from Q and Mark by Matthew and Luke as proposed by Q scholars.

Oral Traditions/Sayings

Q

Mark

Matthew

Luke

Q studies face serious challenges both from within the ranks and from without. Significant work is being done that reconstructs the textual history of the New Testament using Mark as the first Gospel but without postulating a source such as Q. Others have gone back to the Augustinian hypothesis—that the Gospels were composed in their canonical order. While these arguments may appear too nuanced to be meaningful, the stakes are great. Silence on issues such as Q has permitted those who see things otherwise to have an almost unimpeded voice, which has led many to believe that a consensus is emerging. We as Latter-day Saints have a great interest in Christian origins, probably more so than most.

We do not object to the possible use of sources by the Evangelists, and we expect that if such sources were available to them in the earliest years of the Church, they would make good use of them. We object, however, to what is being said concerning the items that those early sources did not contain, and we openly question whether such a document actually existed. The problem lies not necessarily in Q but in what Q has become.

Notes

1. The “two-document hypothesis” affirms that Matthew and Luke each used the Gospel of Mark as a source in composing their own Gospels as well as an earlier unknown source called Q from the German word for “source,” Quelle.

2. A great deal of suspicion has surrounded the work of the Jesus Seminar, founded in 1985 by Robert Funk and currently located in Santa Rosa, California.
The work of the seminar focuses on ascertaining the origins and validity of all traditions about Jesus of Nazareth from His birth until AD 200. The participants of the seminar have garnered a great deal of criticism and suspicion because of their often countercultural theories and dismissal of many of Jesus’s sayings as inauthentic and secondary.

3. This trend is hinted at by John S. Kloppenborg in *Excavating Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 11–54.

4. This sentiment was recently expressed by John H. Vandenberg, “What Is Truth?” *Ensign*, May 1978, 54. He states, “We know that the Bible is a compilation of the available messages received by the prophets.”

5. I see almost no way of maintaining the tradition that the author of the Gospel of Matthew was an eyewitness if the two-document hypothesis is correct. The only way that he could still be claimed to have any access to eyewitness traditions is through Q and the detection of the method in which he rearranges the material from Mark and Q.


7. The one instance of a healing in Q is the healing of the centurion’s son (see Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10). The account of the miracle itself, however, cannot be ascribed to Q because there is little, if any, verbal similarity in the account of the miracle. Q, by definition, contained only the request of the centurion and not the subsequent miracle (see John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels* [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988], 48–51).


9. This has been consistently pointed out by Q scholars, who note that Luke is referring to Q. It may also contain a broader perspective—that Matthew, Mark, and maybe even John had been written and that now Luke proposes to give his account.

10. For the work of the Jesus Seminar, see note 2 above. Jennings has received substantial criticism for his decision to present the Jesus of Q as the accurate, unadulterated Jesus. For some of his responses and his impetus for completing such a project, see abcnnews.go.com/onair/jesus. The special ran on ABC in June 1999.

11. A growing number of scholars are being won over to the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis, made most recently by Mark Goodacre, in *The Case Against Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2002).


Robert J. Matthews, c. 1984

Courtesy of Robert J. Matthews
Teacher, Scholar, Administrator: A Conversation with Robert J. Matthews

Interview by Alexander L. Baugh

Alexander L. Baugh is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.

Sometime ago, while I was conversing with a retired BYU religion faculty member, we began talking about Robert J. Matthews. Our discussion soon focused on what he had done in terms of Religious Education, BYU, and the Church. This colleague said something very interesting: “Robert Matthews will go down as one of the greatest gospel scholars this Church has ever produced, and BYU produced him!” “How true!” I replied, knowing exactly what he meant. Another former colleague of his told me, “Robert Matthews’s painstaking research on the Joseph Smith Translation [JST] helped Church leaders and Latter-day Saint scholars recognize just how important the JST was in the Restoration. If it were not for Robert Matthews, the LDS version of the King James Bible would not have a JST footnote or endnote in it!” Finally, I asked one of Brother Matthews’s dearest and closest friends how he would characterize him. Without hesitation, this friend, paraphrasing Mormon’s assessment of Captain Moroni, said, “If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Robert Matthews, behold, the very powers of hell would be shaken forever.”

Such statements are typical of the feelings Latter-day Saints everywhere have for this great yet humble teacher, scholar, administrator, and Church leader. Although small in stature, Robert J. Matthews stands tall in the eyes of those who have recognized and appreciated his scholarly contributions and who have enjoyed his friendship and collegiality—General Authorities, BYU officials, department colleagues (many of whom consider him their mentor), CES personnel, and literally thousands of students whom he has taught over the course of four decades.
In 1994, following a forty-year career in the Church Educational System and Religious Education at BYU (1955–94), Robert J. Matthews officially retired. His service in CES included teaching seminary in Soda Springs, Idaho, and institute in southern California before serving as a researcher, course writer, and editor, in the CES Central Office. In 1971 he received a university appointment in the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU, where he remained for the next twenty-four years. From 1981 to 1991, he also served as dean of Religious Education at BYU. In the Church, Brother Matthews served for twenty-five years on the Church Correlation and Evaluation Committee, in addition to serving as a bishop, stake president, and patriarch.

Although it has been ten years since his retirement, Brother Matthews continues to lead an active life. From 1996 to 1999, he served as the first president of the Mount Timpanogos Temple, along with his wife, Shirley, who served as temple matron. He maintains an office in the Joseph Smith Building and continues to research and write. He also teaches from time to time—conducting seminars, teaching an occasional class, participating in symposia, and guest lecturing for BYU Education Week.

In the following interview, conducted on November 21, 2003, Brother Matthews provided glimpses into his early years that illustrate how he received his testimony of the restored gospel. In addition, he shared details regarding several life-changing events that shaped his gospel thinking and led him to seek a career in Church education and later to pursue a lifelong investigation and study of the Joseph Smith Translation. Also of interest to readers will be his experience on the Church’s Scripture Publication Committee, his role as a senior editor of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, his feelings about his accomplishments as dean of Religious Education, and his personal philosophy regarding religious education in general.

Baugh: Share with us some of the memories you have of your parents and family and what it was like growing up in Evanston, Wyoming, in the 1930s and 1940s.

Matthews: I was born in Evanston. I was the youngest of eight children. There was a twenty-year stretch between the first one and the last one. My parents were both from England. They met in Salt Lake City after their families came to Utah. Five of my brothers and my sister were born in Salt Lake, but my family moved to Evanston and had a little farm, and then one more brother and I came along. So I had the benefit of some very fine older brothers and one sister, and they were very
good to me; as I look back on my growing-up years, they were good examples. They were good members of the Church and good citizens, some of them held public office, and there was a time when we all lived on one street. I had the benefit in terms of a large and faithful family.

One other thing I might mention about Evanston is that it’s not necessarily a Latter-day Saint community. My friends were Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, and I got an insight into other churches. I often visited those other churches, and we had gospel conversations. I lived across the street from the Catholic church for many years, so I had a firsthand acquaintance with the beliefs of other churches; most of my friends were from them, so it was a multireligious experience.

**Baugh:** Are any of your siblings still alive?

**Matthews:** I have one brother—the brother just older than I, six years older—he’s still alive, and we keep in contact. He lives in Ogden.

**Baugh:** Did you have any particularly meaningful, life-changing, or spiritual experiences during your early years that impacted your life?

**Matthews:** I don’t remember any unusual experiences. After I was a teenager, I did have an experience that has to do with the Joseph Smith Translation. I think we’ll mention that a little later when we come to how I got interested in the JST. It was a spiritual experience, and it has remained with me throughout my life.

I did a lot of farmwork and construction work as a boy. There were accidents from time to time, and my life was spared. I thought nothing particularly unusual about it at the time, other than I stayed alive, but there were some accidents—runaway horses and accidents with machinery where I could easily have been killed. As I look back now, I’m very glad my life was spared. Otherwise the kind of things I’ve done, particularly with the scriptures, might not have been done until much later. That’s about as much as I could mention.

I did have an invitation to go up for an airplane ride. I was seventeen, and a very good friend of mine was the pilot, and he said, “Let’s go next Sunday morning.” I knew I shouldn’t be out flying Sunday morning. We worked together in a garage, and all week long he would talk about how on Sunday morning we were going for a ride. Saturday night as I left for home, he said, “I’ll see you in the morning?” and I said, “No.” He looked very disappointed. I felt so bad. But the next morning I went to priesthood meeting, and I saw the airplane flying up above. Airplanes were very scarce in Evanston in those days, so I knew
this was the plane. And as I came out of church, my sister-in-law said to me, “There’s been an accident.” I asked about the pilot, and she said, “Oh, he’s all right, but the passenger that he had with him was killed.” I don’t know if that plane would have crashed if I had been in it, but I do believe that may be the most important priesthood meeting I ever attended.

_Baugh:_ Who were some individuals in your early years who had a strong influence in your life?

_Matthews:_ Well, definitely my parents. My father and mother were both active in the Church, and not just mildly active. My father was a student of the scriptures, and my mother knew and loved the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. There never was a big display about it, but it was always characteristic of our home that we had the scriptures, and we talked about them and read them. We discussed the Prophet Joseph Smith and Presidents Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor. That was a daily experience in our home. So my parents were a very strong influence, as were my older brothers and my sister.

_Baugh:_ For many young men, serving a mission establishes the spiritual foundation for their future. You served in the California Mission in 1946–47 under President Oscar W. McConkie Sr. What were a few of the highlights of your missionary service?

_Matthews:_ I’ve often thought about what a great experience it was for a young man, just barely nineteen, to come under the influence of such a great spiritual giant as Oscar W. McConkie. And he was a spiritual giant. To be around him for the length of a mission and hear his testimony was simply wonderful. He would utter prophecies, and he would preach and expound. I often thought that it was just like having Alma or Nephi for a mission president, and I’m sure that experience established in me a spiritual base that I hope I’ve always kept.

_Baugh:_ Talk about some of your experiences as an undergraduate at BYU and about meeting your wife, Shirley.

_Matthews:_ During my first year as an undergraduate at BYU, I was not much of a scholar. I went on a mission, and when I came back, I didn’t attend the whole year like most students do. I was living in Evanston. I worked part time and would come down during the winter quarter. I took a lot of home-study courses. I completed almost an entire year by home study and had an intense interest in geography. At
first, I thought I wanted to study something along the lines of geography. However, my mission president was an attorney, so for the first two or three years after my mission, I thought I ought to be an attorney. But I gave that up, and after a while I thought I would like to be a geography teacher, so it was my ambition to get a teaching certificate and teach geography and history.

I did not meet my wife at BYU. She returned from a mission to Texas and came to Evanston to work. She worked in the hospital, and that’s where I met her. We were both returned missionaries of marriageable age, and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. We lived in Evanston for a year after we were married. She stayed and worked in Evanston teaching in the public schools and lived with my mother, who was then a widow, and I came to BYU for the last year and a half to complete my bachelor’s degree. I was a very good student then and went home every weekend.

**Baugh**: Who performed your marriage?

**Matthews**: We were married by the president of the temple, ElRay L. Christiansen, who had once been the president of the Logan Temple.

**Baugh**: Tell about how you came to be employed in the Church Educational System [CES].

**Matthews**: In my last year at school, I was majoring in education with a composite major in political science, history, and geography. I had spoken seriously with the superintendent of schools in Rich County, Utah, about teaching there after I graduated. We hadn’t signed anything, but we had talked favorably, and we were in the same stake. One day when I was at summer school at BYU, I met a former missionary companion, and he was just aglow. We had gotten along beautifully as missionaries, but he had not always been aglow. That day he was just sparkling. I said to him, “What’s new in your life?” He said, “I’ve been teaching seminary for a year, and it’s wonderful!” Since it was summer school, my wife was with me, and I invited him home for dinner, and he sat and told me about what it was like teaching seminary. The next day I went over to the seminary office on campus and asked for a job, and I got it. So he’s the one responsible for me getting in the Church Educational System.

**Baugh**: Do you remember his name?

**Matthews**: Oh yes, his name was Kirk Moffatt Curtis, and he was from Orangeville, Utah.
**Baugh:** Did he have a long career in Church education?

**Matthews:** No, he had only about a year and a half. He was not married, and you had to be married to stay in the Church seminary system, so they let him go. [laughs]

**Baugh:** You spent from 1955 to 1971 in the Church Educational System in seminaries and institutes and the last seven years of that time as an administrator. Discuss some aspects and highlights of your career in CES.

**Matthews:** Well, my first assignment as a seminary teacher was in Soda Springs, Idaho, which was a marvelous experience. I loved it. It was great. It was wonderful. I met people there, not only the students but also the townspeople, who were very gracious to my wife and to me and who were great examples of Latter-day Saints. I still correspond with many students that I had then. After that I was transferred to southern California to teach in the institute program there under the direction of Paul H. Dunn—he was not a General Authority at that time—and we were there a couple of years and then transferred to Provo, where I worked in the central office as an editor, course writer, and researcher for the next seven years. I was seven years in Idaho, two years in California, and seven years in the central office. While it was great to work in the central office, and there were some very marvelous people there—William E. Berrett, Dale T. Tingey, Alma P. Burton, and Frank D. Day—my heart was in teaching. Ellis Rasmussen called me one day from the Joseph Smith Building and said, “Dr. Sperry is retiring, and that leaves an opening. Would you be interested?” I had just completed my doctorate and I said, “Yes, I would be interested.” So I was hired at BYU in Religious Instruction.

**Baugh:** And that was in 1971?

**Matthews:** That is correct. That’s the same year that Dallin H. Oaks became president of BYU.

**Baugh:** How did you develop such a great love for the scriptures?

**Matthews:** Well, I don’t know; it was just always there. I suppose my parents had something to do with that. We talked scriptures in the morning, we talked scriptures at mealtime, we talked scriptures at night. I suppose it was a natural thing, and my parents had certainly fostered it, although not directly. And having two years under the leadership of Oscar W. McConkie surely encouraged it. He used to say
to me, “Somebody in your ward or stake is going to know more about the gospel than anybody else, and it might just as well be you.” I don’t know how many people he told that to, but it was a powerful influence on me. I think it was just a natural thing. The scriptures appealed to my thinking. I was not interested in knowing more than anyone else—I just wanted to keep up.

**Baugh:** What books, outside the scriptures, have been the most important books to you and have shaped your understanding of the gospel and your theological framework?

**Matthews:** One nonreligious book that I read as part of the home-study assignment was *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, which impressed me greatly. Franklin’s wit and wisdom and good judgment have been a guide to me all my life. Another book that I read as part of that course was *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*. Those two books wielded a great influence on me. I still have the two books. I frequently look things up in them.

As for religious books besides the scriptures that have influenced me, I think I would have to say the first was *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. I think that book has had a greater influence than any other book except for the scriptures. Also, Joseph Fielding Smith wrote the books *The Way to Perfection* and *The Progress of Man*. He wrote other books, but because I read these early in life—I read them in my twenties—they shaped my doctrinal thinking. I am grateful those books came into my life at an early age.

**Baugh:** Both your master’s and PhD work focused on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. How did you become interested in the JST?

**Matthews:** As I mentioned, I grew up in a religious home, and my parents were great admirers of the Prophet Joseph Smith. But I never heard one word about Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. I didn’t know he made one. One day during the summer after graduating from high school, I was sitting in the living room with my father and mother—I was the last one at home—and we were listening to Joseph Fielding Smith, who was giving a lecture over the radio on a Sunday evening. And in that lecture, speaking about the Godhead, he quoted John 1:18, “No man hath seen God at any time.” And then he said, “Now, that’s not translated correctly.” He said, “Joseph Smith in a revelation was told how it should read.” When Elder Smith said the word “revelation,” that just sank right into my soul. If he had said any other
word, it would not have had the same effect, but when he said that
Joseph Smith by revelation received that passage in different wording,
that struck me. It penetrated me. I can tell you the day, it was July 9,
1944. The reason I remember the date is because that series of lectures
was published in a book called The Restoration of All Things. After it
was published, I looked up that particular lecture to see what day it was
given. That was the day I first learned there was a Joseph Smith Trans-
lation, at least that he had made a translation. But it was that feeling,
and that feeling has never left me. And all through the years—I think
about it frequently, though not every day—that impression has risen
to the surface within me. I never said anything to my father or mother
about it—not ever—I don’t think I ever did mention it, but I can date
my interest in the JST to the talk by Joseph Fielding Smith and the
word “revelation.” I think that is important for this reason too: it gave
me, at the very beginning, a particular point of view of what Joseph
Smith was doing. He wasn’t making the translation out of curiosity,
and he wasn’t doing it according to his own wisdom or judgment, but
he did it by revelation.

Baugh: Do you recall Joseph Fielding Smith even mentioning
the word translation to make you more aware that he indeed made
a translation?

Matthews: No, I don’t think so. I think he just said, “Joseph Smith
in a revelation was told that that was not a correct verse.” And then he
read the passage as it occurs in the JST. That was in the summer after
I graduated from high school. That fall I came to BYU, and I talked
to Sidney B. Sperry about it and asked him if he knew anything about
Joseph Smith translating the Bible, and he said he did. But nobody
knew very much about it, and most of those who had heard about it
said, “We don’t believe in it. We don’t trust it. He didn’t do much
anyway.” Everyone was downplaying it. Brother Sperry did not down-
play it, but nobody knew anything about it. But I had that drive within
me, and that’s what eventually led me to contact the Reorganized
[RLDS] Church to see if I could see the original manuscripts, because
the popular view was that the Reorganized Church had changed it.
I didn’t have to be converted to the idea of Joseph Smith doing the
work. I was converted to it. I just had to find evidence so I could
teach other people about it. Whenever I would quote from the Joseph
Smith Translation, they’d say, “You can’t trust that. The Reorganized
Church has changed it.” I knew I had to see the original manuscript.
When I wrote and asked, they told me no. It was a process of fifteen
years from the time I first asked until they let me go there and see the original documents.

**Baugh:** When did you come to the conclusion that more needed to be known about the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible?

**Matthews:** Hindsight is sometimes more clear than foresight. I never did have a feeling that I was going to have a message for the world. What was happening was that I had a very personal interest that would not go away. There was a man, N. B. Lundwall, who wrote a lot of books in the Church and compiled a lot of materials. Brother Lundwall talked occasionally in his books about the Joseph Smith Translation, so I wrote him a letter and asked him about it. He lived in Salt Lake. At this time I had returned from my mission and was a student at BYU. He told me something I had not known, and that was that he was a convert from the RLDS Church. He said, “I can get you a copy.” Neither Deseret Book nor anybody else would ever have handled an Inspired Version [the name of the JST published by the RLDS Church] of the Bible in those days. He said, “I can get you a copy from my friends in Independence.” So he got me my first copy of the Inspired Version of the Bible, and I went through it. Again, I think you could call it a thirst. I had a thirst for knowledge about the JST, so I read the entire King James Version [KJV] and the entire Joseph Smith Translation. Having both books open before me on the table, I would read a sentence from one and then the corresponding sentence from the other and then mark the differences. It took some years to do that, but eventually I went through the entire JST and compared every word to the KJV. I was impressed with the clarity and the contribution that Joseph Smith was making to understanding the Bible. I’d mention that to people and they’d say, “Oh, well, you can’t trust that.” So I knew I had to contact the Reorganized Church and see the manuscript.

**Baugh:** For many years Latter-day Saint scholars had difficulty conducting research in Independence at the RLDS [now the Community of Christ] Archives. What was your relationship with the RLDS officials and leaders?

**Matthews:** As I’ve indicated, for many years they would not let me see the original manuscript. But they had a change of personnel, and sometimes that makes a big difference in any organization. The former historian had passed away, and a new man came in, Richard P. Howard. He had different views. He had a master’s degree in history from Berkeley, and when I wrote to him and asked if I could come, he said
yes. I thought, “He probably doesn’t understand,” so I called him on the phone and he said, “I know what you mean, and if you want to come we’ll let you see it.” He said, “You can see hard copies.” That’s the first time I ever heard that term.

I was scheduled for a speaking tour with BYU throughout the Midwest, and on June 20, 1968, I was scheduled to be in Kansas City. So I said, “I’ll be there at eight in the morning, on the 20th of June.” I spent that whole day in the RLDS library. They showed me the marked Bible. They also brought out a photocopy of the manuscript and wanted me to read that, and I said, “I’d like to see the original.” He said, “No, everything on the original is here,” so on that first visit all I saw was the photographic copy. I made subsequent visits, and from time to time I’d say, “You know there is a word here that isn’t clear; we need to look at the original.” Richard Howard was very accommodating. As time went on, he let me work directly from the original, and I didn’t have to use the photocopies. They also let me copy all of the marks out of Joseph Smith’s Bible into one of my copies of the King James Bible. The King James Bible that Joseph Smith used had a lot of marks that had no words of revision, but it had indications as to what verses should be corrected and where in the verse the correction needed to occur. So it was very, very helpful.

As for my relationship with the RLDS officials and leaders, they were all very gracious to me. They were a little formal at first because they didn’t know what a “Utah Mormon” looked like. But as we became better acquainted, they were more free and open with me. I was very polite. I did not try to convert them, but they frequently asked me questions about things, and I was always happy to answer. It was a congenial working relationship. I made many visits there, and I never made a surprise visit. I’d always either write or call and say, “I’d like to come on such and such a day and stay a week; is that all right?” And they always said yes. I treated them with the respect they deserved. After all, it was their library, and I was there at their good pleasure. They reciprocated with kindness to me. My first visit, as I’ve indicated, was June 20, 1968. I went back again in August and then in November, and then I didn’t go again until the next April. But from 1968 to 1974, I made thirteen visits. The first visit was one day only, but all the rest were weeks—Monday through Friday. They were very helpful to me. I would ask Richard Howard questions from time to time, and he was very knowledgeable and very helpful. I used their typewriter and copied the entire manuscript, four hundred and some pages. The pages were about 8 by 13 3/4 inches. The scribes had written right
out to the edge of the paper. They didn’t waste any space. I have in my possession an entire typescript—word for word—and I made it look as much like the original as possible, line by line. When they skipped an inch or two of space, I skipped an inch or two of space. I have a large typescript of all the changes that are in the various manuscripts of the JST, plus I have a KJV in which I have copied, with their permission, all of the changes from the large King James Version that Joseph Smith had—not word changes, but indications where corrections needed to be made. I want to emphasize that all of that was done in their library, under their view, using their machine, with their permission. There was no subterfuge or anything. I was totally open with them, and they appreciated that.

_Baugh:_ While Joseph Smith made literally thousands of changes, corrections, and additions to the King James text, are there one or two that you consider to be the most important or significant?

_Matthews:_ That’s a difficult question to answer because there are so many, and there are no trivial changes in the JST. But I have felt that anything that has to do with the doctrine of Christ, anywhere that the JST offers something about Jesus that the KJV does not have, that has to be an important passage. In the sixth chapter of the book of Moses, which of course is an excerpt from Genesis of the JST, Adam asks the
Lord, “Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water?” And the Lord said to him, “Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden” [Moses 6:53]. And then it says, “Hence came the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world” [Moses 6:54]. Now I felt that that was an important doctrinal passage because it establishes the innocence of children and that children are not born under original sin. Then in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus is talking about little children and He says, “For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost” [Matthew 18:11]. Now this was said in the context of a discussion about little children, and Jesus said, “For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost and to call sinners to repentance; but these little ones have no need of repentance, and I will save them” [JST, Matthew 18:11]. That’s the way the JST completes that thought so that those two passages establish beyond any dispute the teaching that little children are born innocent and clean, and they are automatically saved if they should die as little children. They are saved by the Atonement of Christ.

If those two passages had remained in the Bible through the centuries, one in the Old Testament and one in the New, then the whole doctrinal concept of the depravity of children and the necessity for baptism of little children—and it has been practiced far and wide by the Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Church of England, the Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church—none of that would have been established if those two verses had remained in the Bible. So I feel that while all of the changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith are important, I think this example is one of unequaled historical and doctrinal clarification. I’ll tell you one of the values of the Joseph Smith Translation—it’s like having Joseph Smith for a study companion.

_Baugh:_ For many years you served on the Scriptures Publications Committee, and you had a role in the 1979 publication of the LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible. Talk about your involvement in that publishing effort.

Matthews: In 1971 the Church had grown large enough and the time was right to publish our own edition of the Bible. It was made very clear by the First Presidency that it had to be the King James Version, but they were interested in developing study aids. In fact, for a long time it was called the Bible Aids Committee, but finally it was called the Scriptures Publications Committee. A committee was
selected. Elder Thomas S. Monson, who was then one of the youngest members of the Twelve, was the chairman of the committee. Other members of the committee were Elder Boyd K. Packer, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, and, for a short time, Elder Marvin J. Ashton.

The committee members spent their first year deciding what kind of study aids and helps to include, and they determined that there would be a new Bible Dictionary, a concordance (which developed into what is now known as the Topical Guide), all new chapter headings, explanations of Greek and Hebrew words, and excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. The members of the Twelve were assisted by a large number of other people. William James Mortimer, who was Church publisher, was appointed as the secretary of that group. Ellis T. Rasmussen and Robert Patch, both from BYU, and I were asked to serve on that committee as technical advisers.

We did a lot of research and a lot of legwork, and each month we would meet with those three members of the Twelve. Elder Ashton was assigned to other places, so we met with Elder Monson, Elder Packer, and Elder McConkie and reported on what we had done since the previous meeting, and they gave us assignments for the next month. That went forward from 1971 until 1979, when the Bible was done, and then we were assigned to improve chapter headings and cross-references for the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Altogether, we didn’t get through until 1981, so it was about a ten-year project.

Sometimes people have asked me, “What was your impression of meeting once a month, sometimes more often, with three members of the Twelve over a ten-year period?” I can tell you truthfully, if I were asked to sustain them as prophets, seers, and revelators, I would want to raise both hands, not just one hand. It was a spiritual experience to watch those Brethren make decisions. They would talk among themselves briefly, but we would work diligently for thirty days and give something to them, and if there was a flaw in it, they would pick it out immediately. They had tremendous perception and insight. If it was acceptable, they would just discuss it very briefly, in a matter of ten seconds or so, and then agree to it. I saw revelation operate in those men day after day.

**Baugh:** Talk about your role in the 1992 Macmillan publication of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism.*

**Matthews:** Many people had reported to the Brethren that when they would go into a public library in a large city, a university library, or
a private library, there were generally anti-Mormon books but not very many books favorable to the Church. I had the same experience while I was teaching institute at UCLA. I went over to the UCLA library one day, and all they had was anti-Mormon books. My colleague, George A. Horton Jr., and I got some members of the Church to donate some good LDS books—*Gospel Doctrine* and other books—to put in the library so that people would have a better choice.

The idea of an encyclopedia of Mormonism originated with Macmillan Company, but they approached some of our people—I think S. Kent Brown was one of the first they approached—and then it was presented to the Brethren. I'm sure the reason the Brethren were willing that there should be an encyclopedia of Mormonism was so these volumes might be put in large public and university libraries throughout the world so that people wanting to learn about the Church would have some kind of authentic, widespread, easy-to-read information. So the First Presidency selected Daniel H. Ludlow to be the editor-in-chief, and then a board of editors, of which I was one. For about four years we worked on the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. We had a little hesitation about calling it the “Encyclopedia of Mormonism” (we wanted the correct name of the Church), but Macmillan was insistent that if we used the whole, long Church name, nobody would know who it was. So the agreement was made that under the title *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, it would read *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. That was the background, and it was a huge undertaking.

Brother Ludlow did a major piece of work in coordinating and governing all of the work to make the volumes of the encyclopedia. Again, it was done under the leadership of several of the Brethren. It was not an official Church publication, but it does contain a lot of very useful information. Macmillan was surprised that we could do it so quickly and that so many copies were sold. The Church Educational System and many other people ordered copies, and it was a success. I would say it was work—it was very hard work. But working on the scriptures was also hard work. The scriptures were a ten-year project. The encyclopedia was only a four-year project. I did not seek to participate in either of those experiences, but I look back now and feel like that was quite an unusual thing to take this country boy out of Wyoming and put him on two such august committees.

*Baugh:* You were dean of Religious Education at BYU from 1982 to 1991. What were some of the challenges you faced?

*Matthews:* Of course it’s a great honor to be dean of Religious
Education, and that also was not an honor I had sought. At the time I was chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture, but I was asked to be the dean. This was a time of transition for Brigham Young University. There was a major overhaul and a new emphasis given to the university to upgrade the academic standards. New ways in selecting faculty and giving rank advancement were being incorporated. The whole university was undergoing change, particularly in academic areas. To become dean at just such a time without any past experience was rather interesting. One of the challenges was maintaining the proper character of religious education when everything was going toward an academic emphasis. It's my feeling and conviction that while academic excellence and hard study have a place in religious education, the foundation of religious education is testimony and revelation and the building of character. There were some dichotomies presented there, and I was right in the middle of it. Those were some challenges.

**Baugh:** What do you feel were some of your significant accomplishments as dean?

**Matthews:** I think in any academic organization the greatest assets are the faculty, so I feel like the greatest thing I accomplished as dean was the new faculty members we brought on board. We also gave the faculty members opportunity for inservice training and research and various things.

One thing we did was to inaugurate core curriculum. We discovered that students could fill their required numbers of religion hours for university graduation and do it in some areas that were very one-sided. There was a time when Boy Scouting and a number of less-doctrinal courses counted as religion credit. In the core curriculum, we made certain that every student who graduated from BYU would need to study Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and New Testament. That made the faculty who taught Old Testament feel bad, but students still had some electives, and we did not downgrade Old Testament. But in my thinking, Book of Mormon, New Testament, and Doctrine and Covenants were absolutely essential. The core curriculum requirements cover that and still leave room for students to enroll in Church history, Old Testament, Pearl of Great Price, and world religions. I feel that we made some progress when we made the core curriculum scripturally oriented.

There was a lot of desire, even from the administration, to have classes like “Your Religious Problems” and “Principles and Doctrines of Mormonism” in the core, and I resisted making those basic to the
core curriculum because we would have to have those instead of some scripture courses. “Your Religious Problems” would reflect very much the particular mindset of the professor, as would “Principles and Doctrines of Mormonism.” But if you have a scripture course using the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, or the New Testament as the basic text, the Lord designed that curriculum—not a faculty member or group of faculty members. Next to hiring the right kind of faculty and giving the faculty inservice opportunities, I think the establishment of the core curriculum was a major accomplishment.

The core curriculum consisted of two classes covering the entire Book of Mormon, one class from the New Testament, and one class from the Doctrine and Covenants. That doesn’t cover the entire New Testament or the entire Doctrine and Covenants, but it provides some exposure, and that’s very, very important. If you were to look through the catalog of courses before the core curriculum was adopted, you would see that religion credit was given for courses not nearly as basic as Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and New Testament.

**Baugh:** What is your educational philosophy as it relates to religious education at BYU, and what are your concerns about the future of religious education in the Church or at BYU?

**Matthews:** That’s a question that requires much thought, and religion is essentially spiritual. True religion always has to be revelatory. Those are not the kinds of things that thrive in an academic environment. In an academic environment, knowledge is acquired by hard evidence that can be measured and repeated at will, which is experiment oriented, rather than revelation or testimony oriented. I think one of the great challenges at BYU is maintaining the proper spirit or the proper attitude and decorum of true religion in an academic atmosphere and then basing rank advancement and so forth on an academic basis. That is a very interesting challenge.

**Baugh:** You have witnessed many changes in the Church Educational System over the last fifty years. What are some of the most significant?

**Matthews:** I came into the Church Educational System in 1955, teaching seminary, and one of the major changes that I have seen is the way in which the curriculum is handled. In those bygone days, we often used textbooks in Old and New Testament that were written by Protestant scholars, like the book by George A. Buttrick about the parables. One of the major changes that I have seen is that we have adopted courses of study that are anchored and rooted in scripture,
especially latter-day scripture, and in books that are written by members of the Church. Our lessons have gone from social and behavioral objectives to more doctrinal objectives. It’s amazing to see the great changes that have taken place in the past fifty years in the curriculum of seminaries and institutes and also at BYU.

_Baugh:_ What role do you see BYU having in the larger Church Educational System?

_Matthews:_ That’s a very good question. This is a major university with a branch in Hawaii and in Rexburg, and there can be no discounting the influence that Brigham Young University has. I think there will always be a Brigham Young University. As I have studied the history of BYU, there have been from time to time changes in policy and direction as to how the university would relate to the rest of the Church school system. I think only the Brethren could answer that question because they constitute the board of trustees. There will always be a Brigham Young University, of necessity. But there will always be seminaries and institutes also. At the present time, they’re all under the Church Educational System, but BYU is not the head of the others. I think at one time it was thought that it might become so. I think many thought it ought to be. I don’t think it is now, and I don’t know what the future will hold. That’s a decision the board of trustees will have to make.

_Baugh:_ What, to you, is a successful gospel teacher, and when has a teacher truly succeeded?

_Matthews:_ I think a successful gospel teacher is one who teaches by the Spirit. Teaching by the Spirit is more than just teaching the truth. If you’re teaching by the Spirit, you bear testimony. And not only that, the Spirit indicates to you what should be taught on any particular day. A person could teach truth every day and still not teach by the Spirit unless he or she was teaching the particular truths that the Lord wanted to have taught that day in that class. A successful gospel teacher has to teach by the Spirit. We talk about people who seem to be spiritual, but what makes a person spiritual? A person is spiritual only if he or she has the Holy Spirit. Joseph Smith said that you cannot teach the gospel without the Holy Ghost.

_Baugh:_ You’ve been a Sunday School teacher, bishop, stake patriarch, stake president, and temple president. What aspects of your ecclesiastical callings have been particularly meaningful and rewarding?

_Matthews:_ All of those callings had certain frustrations and rewards,
and they’ve all included dedication, hard work, and, occasionally, a little disappointment. I have done all those things. I’ve worked at about every level of the Church there is outside of being a General Authority. I suppose the most rewarding and one of the most difficult callings was temple president. I frequently thought while I was president that everything I had done up to that point had prepared me for the demands made upon me as temple president. My years as a seminary teacher, my years as a bishop, my years teaching at BYU, twenty-five years on the Correlation Committee, the Scriptures Committee, the Encyclopedia Committee, my years as husband and father—all those things came together in one assignment as president of the Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple. When you are a temple president, you have much responsibility. You deal with excellent people, but problems arise every day that you never encountered before. You are in the cleanest of surroundings. You are with the highest level of human beings. It’s just wonderful! It is difficult at times, but there’s nothing like being in the house of the Lord where you feel the Spirit every day. I don’t know of anything that is quite like that. For me, being a temple president was a crowning event. I don’t know how much longer I’ll live, but I hope I have a lot of opportunities to work in the temple. Growth and experience are found in every calling.

**Baugh:** Were you not called as temple president of the Mount Timpanogos Temple even prior to it being dedicated?

**Matthews:** Yes, about six months before it was dedicated. I was first called in May 1996 and served from October 1996 to the first of November 1999.

**Baugh:** Did you select your counselors?

**Matthews:** Yes. My counselors at the beginning were Dan J. Workman, a CES man before his retirement, and Herschel N. Pedersen, a former BYU basketball star, who had spent his life working at Geneva Steel. Both of these brethren were true-blue hard workers, respected by the community, and they were great counselors. Their wives were assistants to my wife as matron. After two and a half years, Brother Workman was called to be president of the temple in Vernal, Utah, and I selected Noel T. Greenwood to replace him. He was from Lindon and had been my stake president at one time. Brother Pedersen then became my first counselor, and Brother Greenwood served as my second counselor.
Baugh: And you continue to work as a sealer in the Mount Timpanogos temple?
Matthews: That’s correct. From the time I was released until the present time, I’ve been a sealer in the temple.

Baugh: And you also continue to be an active patriarch in your stake. Would you care to comment about that?
Matthews: Being a patriarch is a unique calling and responsibility. Much of the time you don’t know the people who come to receive a blessing. You know they have a recommend signed by their bishop, but you don’t know anything about them, and you don’t know anything about the family most of the time. I’ve decided that doesn’t matter much anyway because the blessing isn’t mine; the blessing has to come from Heavenly Father. Our Father in Heaven is the real Patriarch, and what a patriarch has to do is to be in tune so that when he places his hands upon the head of the person, he can get some inspiration of the blessing the Lord has for that individual. That’s not an easy thing. It’s a little scary. It’s also scary because patriarchal blessings are recorded. The individual is given a typewritten copy. Another copy is sent to the Church Archives in Salt Lake. People read their patriarchal blessings throughout their lives, and you have a short period of time to get the inspiration from the Lord to give them a blessing that they are going to read and that the family is going to value for maybe two or three generations. That’s a little different from teaching a Sunday School class.

Baugh: What are your plans for the future, and what projects do you hope to finish in the next few years?
Matthews: My plans for the future, however long or short that may be, are to continue to work in the temple and continue to serve in the Church in whatever areas I am called. I am particularly interested in the welfare of my children and my grandchildren. I am trying to write a little family history. I’m not trying to write so much about myself, but I’m interested in giving to my children and grandchildren some perspective and understanding of how my father and mother and their families first came into the Church. We haven’t been in the Church for generations. I’m the second generation in the Church, and my grandparents joined when they were older. I want my children and grandchildren to know and to have in writing firsthand accounts—clear, convincing, testimony-bearing accounts—of how our family heard about the gospel, left England, came to America, and settled in the West because of the Church. I think if they don’t know that, they
won’t really know who they are, and they need to know who they are. I frequently talk to my children about my parents and grandparents whom they don’t know, including some things about what they have sacrificed and given up for the Church and why they were willing to do it. If children don’t have that information about their ancestors, they don’t understand about the Apostasy and the Restoration.

_Baugh:_ If you could live your life over again, what, if anything, would you do differently?

_Matthews:_ It’s hard to say. If I could live it over and know then what I know now, I would be a better student in high school. I would probably study a couple of languages so that I could be bilingual. I have studied a little Spanish, French, and German, but not enough to do me any good. My German professor here on campus told me, “Well, you passed, but don’t ever try to translate anything,” and he was serious about it. So I would get an early start in life on things that would have a lasting influence, and learning a language well enough to converse, to read, to do research, to write, and to speak—that’s something I would do. I would learn German, Spanish, and probably Greek. Both of my sons are very conversant in other languages, but it’s because of their missions. I went to California, and I had a marvelous experience in the gospel, which I wouldn’t trade for any language, but I wish that I had studied more diligently in a language.

_Baugh:_ How is your health?

_Matthews:_ My health is quite good. I’ve had a little heart problem in my life. I was telling the doctor recently that I get tired, and he said, “Well, how old are you?” I said, “Going on seventy-eight,” and he said, “That has something to do with it. We can’t fix all of that.” So my health is good. I’ve lived longer than my father. I’ve lived longer than my grandfathers. I have several brothers who did not live as long as I have lived. I have some who have lived longer than I have lived, but we’re down now to one brother and me. I need to live longer to complete the family records. There are some things in my patriarchal blessing that say what I will do, and I can see a fulfillment of every one of those things but one, and that has to do with family records and a little temple work. If all goes well, some of that will be completed soon, and then I can help my wife cultivate her rose garden, and someday when I have time, I suppose I’ll die. \[RE\]
New Publications

Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts
Edited by Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews

This groundbreaking volume presents the latest research into the history and origin of the Joseph Smith Translation and clarifies earlier understandings. The book begins with a series of essays that introduce the New Translation. The first explains what the translation is and how it was produced. Other essays discuss the doctrinal contributions of the Joseph Smith Translation, the history of the manuscripts since Joseph Smith’s death in 1844, the work of the Prophet’s scribes, and the editorial procedures followed in preparing the transcriptions. The main section of the book presents a typographic transcription of all the original manuscript pages of the Joseph Smith Translation, unedited and preserved exactly as dictated by the Prophet and recorded by his scribes. The editors’ intent has been to render, as exactly as possible, the scribes’ original words, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, strikeouts, and insertions.

Available October 2004, 852 pp., $99.95
Prelude to the Restoration:
From Apostasy to the Restored Church
Thirty-third Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

Before Joseph Smith was born, religious scholars such as William Tyndale and Martin Luther put their lives in jeopardy to spread the word of God to their followers, blazing doctrinal trails so that a restoration of the gospel could occur. This volume, copublished with Deseret Book, highlights these influential men and other important Reformers who helped pave the way for the Restoration. The book features talks from the Thirty-third Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, held October 29–30, 2004.

Available November 2004, 304 pp., $24.95

Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The New England States
Edited by Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr, and Bruce A. Van Orden

New England. The name suggests revolution. Muskets and cannons. Redcoats and ragged patriots. Yet this area did more than give rise to American freedom; it gave birth to the Restoration. Here, prophets and apostles were born to guide the Church’s leaders such as Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, and Heber C. Kimball.

Twelve essays take us on a journey through time. We go back to an era when early apostles canvassed New England to elect Joseph Smith president of the United States. We walk with road-weary Jared Carter and other missionaries who left home and family to preach without purse or scrip. A photo essay offers views of a Mayflower replica and of Church history sites, including the birthplace of Joseph Smith in Sharon, Vermont. With a sense of irony, we revisit the Church’s legal battle to build a temple in Boston and finally to add a spire. Contributors to this book include Brigham Young University professors Richard O. Cowan, W. Jeffrey Marsh, Craig J. Ostler, Matthew O. Richardson,
Mary Jane Woodger, Dennis A. Wright, and others.

Available October 2004, 270 pp., $19.95

**Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless, Second Edition**

Hugh W. Nibley

Reaching from the apocalyptic visions of original “treasures in heaven” down to the climax of history, Nibley’s essays in this volume are singular in their penetration, originality, and vitality. The delight of Nibley’s brilliant and sometimes biting prose style imparts a sense of the agelessness of what he calls the “three-act play” of human existence. The author’s own intellectual autobiography, together with his fresh introductory paragraphs for the various chapters, completes this fitting and permanent record of one of the outstanding historians of our time. This revised edition of Nibley’s timeless classic includes a foreword by Truman G. Madsen, emeritus professor of philosophy at Brigham Young University, and a new essay by Gary P. Gillum, who serves as religion, philosophy, and ancient studies librarian at Brigham Young University.

Available December 2004, 326 pp., $27.95

**Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants**

Edited by Craig K. Manscill

“If a revelation is outside the limits of your specific responsibility, you know it is not from the Lord and you are not bound by it,” writes Elder Dallin H. Oaks on the principle of personal revelation. Other General Authorities, including President James E. Faust and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, share classic articles that will help and inspire teachers and students of Church history. The volume, copublished with Deseret Book, features some of the best out-of-print Sperry Symposium articles on the Doctrine and Covenants.

Available December 2004, 400 pp., $25.95
Historians will find a researcher’s treasure trove in this remarkable two-volume reference work that includes 14,400 entries to publications by or about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In fact, the goal of the compilers was to cite every publication in the first hundred years of the Church’s existence. This attractive, library-quality reference work was compiled by Chad J. Flake, former senior librarian at the Harold B. Library, and Larry W. Draper, curator of the library’s Western and Mormon Americana Print Collections.

Published in March 2004, two-volume set, 1526 pp., $149.95

Praise for A Mormon Bibliography

“A well-recognized bibliography in scholarly circles.”—George Mitton, associate editor, Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies

“The most comprehensive resource of early Mormon publications.”—Mike Hooper, American and Mormon history librarian, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University

“This is the most significant bibliography on Mormonism. It includes everything: the good and the bad.”—Patty Aird, Seattle, Washington
Religious Education at Brigham Young University. Since its inception, it has provided funding for numerous projects, including conferences, books, and articles relating to Latter-day Saint culture, history, scripture, and doctrine. The RSC endeavors to use its resources to, first, facilitate excellence in teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; second, encourage research and publication that contribute to the mission of the university and its sponsoring institution, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and third, promote study and understanding of other cultures and religions.

Research and Publication

One of the primary aspects of the RSC’s mission is to promote the search for new truths and the quest to better understand well-known truths. The ultimate interpretation of doctrinal matters rests with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; therefore, we seek to discover historical background, provide cultural and linguistic details, and explore new avenues of understanding into our faith, history, and way of life. Thus, research into scripture, Church history, and religious matters in general is an important part of what the full-time Religious Education faculty do. Because BYU is primarily a teaching institution, we recognize as our major thrust the classroom experience. We seek, however, to expand our classroom through the writing and publication of our research.

The RSC helps fund several meaningful projects each year and publishes books, articles, a newsletter, and the Religious Educator in helping to promote and disseminate Latter-day Saint research and thought. These publications enhance the libraries of Latter-day Saint readers and others who take an interest in the history or culture of the Latter-day Saints.

An Invitation to Join with Us

RSC research and publication projects are sustained by university funding and by financial donations from friends who want to encourage the kind of quality work the RSC does. We are thankful for the generosity of those who support our efforts to bring the best scholarship to light. If you would like to become a donor to the RSC to help its mission, please contact the RSC at 370 JSB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602.

The RSC restricts its publications to items that fit within the scholarly range of the curriculum and mission of Religious Education. It pro-
duces materials that are well written, rigorous, and original and that reflect the doctrine, the history, the teachings of the living prophets, and the standard works of the Restoration. It seeks works that meet academic needs or fill a niche in the area of faithful scholarship. It welcomes all materials that fit within these parameters.
The *Religious Educator* was typeset in Galliard by Jimmy Salazar of Stephen Hales Creative, Inc.
"You, my beloved associates, need to be constantly drinking from the waters of knowledge and revelation. There is so much to learn and so little time in which to learn it."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Four Imperatives for Religious Educators
President Gordon B. Hinckley

Counsel and Correction
Paul V. Johnson

Roles of Support
L. Jill Johnson

Living a Life in Crescendo
Grant C. Anderson

Our Legacy of Religious Education
Stephen K. Iba

Simon and the Woman Who Anointed Jesus's Feet
Gaye Strathearn

Sorting Out the Seven Marys in the New Testament
Blair G. Van Dyke and Ray L. Huntington

How to Ask Questions That Invite Revelation
Alan R. Maynes

"Written, That Ye Might Believe":
Literary Features of the Gospels
Julie M. Smith

A Viewpoint on the Supposedly Lost Gospel Q
Thomas A. Wayment

Teacher, Scholar, Administrator:
A Conversation with Robert J. Matthews
Alexander L. Baugh