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“BYU–Hawaii is a living laboratory where people of many cultures
experience a transformation, where they shed prejudices, misunderstandings, and historical baggage.”
“We need to seek, knock, and ask for the ability to see and discern each student as God sees and discerns that student.”

President Eric B. Shumway

ON THE COVER:
The beauty and diversity of the islands are depicted in this photo of Waiamanalo Beach on Oahu.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CORBIS
The Religious Educator is published three times a year by the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. This publication serves the needs and interests of those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ on a regular basis. The distinct focuses are on teaching the gospel; publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing outstanding devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars.

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Editors’ Introduction

Gospel teachers aim to teach the truths of the scriptures by the Spirit so that those truths are carried to the hearts of their students. This process helps students on their journey to come unto Christ. In this special Church Educational System issue, teachers share ideas to help each other achieve this goal.

Eric B. Shumway, president of BYU–Hawaii, reflects on his service in the islands and offers practical guidance to teachers: See the students as God sees them. Be worthy. Be prepared. Keep an eye out for the underdog. Avoid pontificating. And beware of gospel thrillers.

Next Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy bears witness of the Book of Mormon, the growing number of translations available worldwide and the power of its doctrines. Alan R. Maynes shares ideas on creating questions that invite revelation into the lives of students. Steven T. Linford discusses the importance of personal purity and example in gospel teaching. In a similar vein, W. Jeffrey Marsh asserts that a teacher’s job is not just to instruct but to inspire students to live the gospel. Bryce Dunford continues this theme by describing how a teacher can create a sense of awe that leads students to discover truths on their own. And Kathy K. Clayton shares insights from her own experience with helping students get actively involved in gospel learning.

J. B. Haws demonstrates the importance of remembering our covenants as he shows how the Lamanites kept the Nephites continually “stirred up in remembrance” of the Lord through fighting, through exemplary family life, and by their remarkable faith once converted. Blair Van Dyke explains the Book of Mormon use of contrasts, juxtaposing two individuals or groups or even two time periods against each other to accentuate differences and to teach principles of good and evil.

Brent D. Fillmore reminds us that the key to teaching by the Spirit is using both the scriptures and the teachings of the living prophets, encouraging students to become as familiar with the words of the living prophets in their daily study as they are becoming with the scriptures. And Brian K. Ray explains how Christ becomes the “Father of our salvation” through the doctrines of adoption and Atonement.

Roger K. Petersen, manager of the Church’s intellectual property, shares practical advice on using copyrighted material in our teaching. And Kent P. Jackson presents new discoveries on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible that will be useful for teachers.

Gospel teachers will find this issue particularly instructive in helping them to achieve Christ’s commission “to preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth” (D&C 50:14).

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Editor-in-Chief
R. Devan Jensen, Executive Editor
Ted D. Stoddard, Associate Editor
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President Eric B. Shumway

Photographs by Akiko Sawada
Courtesy of BYU–Hawaii
BYU–Hawaii: A Conversation with Eric B. Shumway

Interview by Fred E. Woods

Eric B. Shumway, an Area Seventy, is president of BYU–Hawaii. Fred E. Woods is a professor of Church history and doctrine and fills a Richard L. Evans Chair for Religious Understanding at the BYU–Provo campus.

Woods: I am meeting with President Eric B. Shumway in his office in Laie on August 6, 2004, and I want to provide a brief life sketch of President Shumway. Born in 1939, he grew up in St. John’s, Arizona. In 1957 he was voted the most valuable player in the high school all-star game in the state of Arizona. In addition, he had an athletic scholarship at BYU–Provo, and he played basketball there for two years before serving a mission to Tonga. He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from BYU in English (1964, 1966) prior to serving as a language coordinator for the Peace Corps. He wrote the Tongan language text for the Peace Corps (1967–68), which was later published by the University of Hawaii. In 1973 he received his PhD from the University of Virginia. He has served as a bishop, a stake high councilor, and the first BYU–Hawaii stake president, a position he held prior to being called as a mission president to Tonga in 1986. He is the eighth president of BYU–Hawaii. He has been serving in this capacity for the last decade and, in addition, is serving as an Area Seventy. He is married to the former Carolyn Merrill, and they have seven children and twenty grandchildren.

President Shumway, as a child or youth in your home, what were some of the most valuable lessons you learned that shaped your behavior as an adult?

Shumway: A thousand things touched my life in the little community where I grew up, but if I were to pinpoint a few, I would say that one of the first is associated with my getting up early every day. I had responsibilities early in the morning—to milk the cows and do the
chores—rain or shine, cold or hot. Of course, that was so commonplace a few years ago in rural communities, but the fact that I loved to get going early has made a big difference in my life. I enjoyed learning to work and doing whatever it took to get a job done rather than simply spending time. If we have a task that needs to be done, we shouldn’t merely think in terms of hours or energy, but whatever it takes to get it done.

Another thing that helped me was having a father, Carroll Shumway, who taught me what a good job looks like. When he taught me how to work, he wouldn’t just say, “Do this.” He would show me what the end result should look like. For example, if he wanted me to weed an area, he would weed about half of it himself and say, “Now, this is the result I want when you get done. The whole area should look exactly like this.” So I had an order, I had a responsibility, and I had a model.

I’ll share a little story that has become kind of a signature experience with my father. He managed two service stations, a Standard Oil and a Richfield service station, located at separate spots in St. John’s. I worked hard for him, but it wasn’t for money. I got my first paying job building fence and stretching barbed wire for a local rancher, Harbon Heap. We worked for maybe fourteen hours, pulling barbed wire, tying stays, and getting our hands bloody. I was really looking forward to getting my first paycheck.

After the day was over, Mr. Heap wrote a check for each one of us. It was a real rush for me. For those fourteen hours of hard work, I got seven dollars—fifty cents an hour. Wow, I was very excited. But
my buddies grumbled under their breath, “We worked that hard—for only fifty cents an hour?” By the time I got home, I was upset that it was only fifty cents an hour. I complained to Dad. I did not expect his response. He said, in effect, “Don’t complain. You may have deserved more. But that’s great. The day your performance exactly meets your salary is the day you disappoint your dad. You should work so no employer can pay you what you’re really worth.” I was impressed with his tone and attitude. When I was complaining I’d been underpaid, he was saying, “That’s good. I hope you have a lifetime of that so you’re always performing ahead of your pay.” That lesson stayed with me.

My mother, Merle Kartchner Shumway, was a public person and a very tenacious teacher, in school and in Church, she taught children to sing, dance, and play musical instruments. We had a very happy home full of music and love. Dad worshiped Mom. Mom had a college degree. Dad did not have the degree, but he was 100 percent supportive. People would sometimes ask, “Carroll, aren’t you ever jealous about all of the glory your wife gets?” He would say, “She is my glory. Her glory is my glory.”

I came home one night and Dad was in the kitchen. It was about 9:30 at night. He had worked long hours that day at the service station. He was still in his greasy Richfield uniform and he was doing Mom’s dishes. I was incensed and said, “Dad, why don’t you make mom come home and do her dishes?” Mom was at a choir practice, preparing for some upcoming event. Dad just turned to me and said, “Sonny, I can’t teach kids how to sing. But I sure as heck can do dishes. So quit your complaining about your mother and come help me with the dishes.” So I had the sense growing up that Dad really loved my mother and that Mother’s talent was a gift to the community. I also learned that even though Dad had a business to run, he was still very concerned about taking care of the home. He could cook and clean and even change diapers. In fact, he told me once, “I’d be ashamed if a woman could do something I couldn’t do—other than have kids.” That was the kind of atmosphere I grew up in.

Woods: What are a few of the important lessons you have gleaned from your callings at BYU–Provo or BYU–Hawaii that have left a lasting impression on you?

Shumway: I have learned many lessons, and most of them have to do with humility and love. I have learned just how precious students are in the sight of God.

I have witnessed how the Lord has guided students and faculty
members to this campus. Nearly every faculty person has had some reassuring spiritual experience that affirmed that they were led to this campus for a special purpose. I have learned also to appreciate the several intellectual and spiritual gifts of colleagues, gifts far superior to my own.

I have been profoundly moved by the quality of service by faculty who were stricken by one impediment or another but continued to serve faithfully to the end. Some taught from wheelchairs, others fought terminal cancer. But as their health waned their spirits were purified and their influence for good became more profound. I’m thinking of Dr. Lance Chance, Dr. David Chen, Dr. Ronald Jackson, and others.

I have learned that a powerful intellect without a divinely anchored conscience can be a pestilence in the world.

I have come to understand that character and testimony constitute learning outcomes far more valuable than material success. I have also come to know that in the learning process love motivates and empowers more than fear or enticements of material reward.

I remember a student who left school just before she graduated to live with her auntie. One course remained for her to complete her degree. She had struggled from past scars and depression. She was allowed to take the course by independent study but not allowed to come on campus because of a serious honor code violation. Nearing the deadline for completing the course, she was unable to rally her spirits or concentrate on the course. It looked like she would fail and never graduate.

I mentioned the situation to one of our faculty members. He said, “Well, let me see what I can do.” He found the girl’s phone number, called her, and said, “Since you can’t come on campus, I will meet you anywhere, anytime, to help you get through this course, if you will let me.” And, he did. He went way out of his way. He stuck with her and helped her, and she finally finished the course and got her degree. She’s back on track now, married with four children. She is active in the Church, and a college graduate thanks to this teacher who extended himself. She was a wounded soul, lost in the desert, as it were, but retrieved by a loving conscientious teacher.

**Woods:** What are some of the tutorials you have learned from the words or examples of modern-day apostles and prophets that have left an indelible impression on you?

**Shumway:** When I was a mission president in Tonga, Elder M. Russell Ballard came down to preside over two stake conferences on the same day in Vava‘u. He invited me to go along with him. We
started about 7:30 in the morning—held the leadership meetings, did all of the training, and the main session—and then we went to another stake and did the same thing all the way up to about 9:30 at night.

When we got back to the hotel, I was absolutely exhausted. I was in my pajamas ready for bed when a knock came at the door. It was my first counselor, Bill Afeaki, who said that Elder Ballard would like to see me in the grill. I said, “Are you sure?” He said, “Oh yes, he asked me to come and get you.”

I found Elder Ballard at the grill. He was talking to a man he had just met, standing in line to get a soft drink. The man was a “yachtie,” who was leaving the very next morning on his yacht. Elder Ballard said, “Oh, President Shumway, so glad you could be here. This is John, and I’ve been talking with him about the gospel. I’ve asked him if he would like to hear the message, and he said yes, and I said he’s in luck because there’s an authorized servant of the Lord in this very hotel who is eager to teach him. Will you find a room somewhere in the hotel where you can pray with this man and teach him the gospel?” I said I would be absolutely delighted to do so.

That was a wonderful experience for me and for the man, but the thing that was indelibly impressed on my mind was that here was an Apostle, older than I was, who at the very moment he was exhausted and wanted a little bit of refreshment before he went to bed, was still talking about the gospel and asking the golden question. Now every time Elder Ballard speaks about anything, I perk up with an extra bit of attention, knowing that this man practices what he preaches.

Elder Ballard has been on our campus many times since then. I introduced him to Nina Mu, a Muslim student from Western China. A number of students had lined up to see him, but when I presented him to Nina, he turned around and whispered to somebody who was with him to run to the bookstore and buy his book, Our Search for Happiness. He wrote his testimony and signed it right there and gave it to her. He knew he may never see her again. As I think of that, I realize that Elder Ballard has a very public ministry of speaking at conferences, presiding at meetings and heading up important Church committees, but he also has a private ministry that he is very attentive too and he’s looking out for the souls of others. That is very important to him. By the way, Nina is now married with a child. She and her husband, John Foster, were baptized into the Church on July 4, 2005.

Another powerful experience was with Elder Philip T. Sonntag. He was in the Area Presidency in Australia when I was mission president, but he was also one of the leaders who interviewed us before we were
called. Elder Sonntag is a big rough-and-tumble guy, but he and his wife, Valoy, had the most amazing ability to distill sweetness and love on their audiences. After one BYU–Hawaii stake fireside, they invited the young people to come forward so that he and Sister Sonntag could get a look at them and give them a hug. What seemed like hundreds of students lined up, and every one of them got a big bear hug and a look in the eye and an “I love you.”

Many of these were international students who were homesick. Some had never experienced that kind of affection. A number of them just fell into Elder and Sister Sonntag’s arms and sobbed. The impression, the indelible impression, was that the Sonntags are blessed with the gift of expressing love. They were a conduit through which the love of Heavenly Father could flow. Their talks were excellent. They could have shaken a few hands, but that wasn’t enough for them. The Spirit told them that there were young people in the audience who needed more than that.

Another wonderful experience was with Elder David B. Haight. In one of the first Board of Education meetings I attended as president of the campus, he was invited to pray by President Hinckley. I had to make a presentation, so I was preoccupied with what I was going say. Elder Haight stood and prayed. Now we know that leaders pray many times a day to begin and end meetings. But to hear Elder Haight was to hear a prayer that went beyond that particular setting. He poured out his heart to Heavenly Father pleading for the young people of the Church, and then he went beyond the stewardship of the Church Educational System to the whole world. I dropped whatever I was thinking and just concentrated on the prayer of this wonderful man. As he was praying, the thought occurred to me, “We meet to pray. Whatever else is on the agenda, we meet to pray. And then we talk, and then we pray again, and everything we do, we do in that special format of prayer, beginning and ending.” I learned the importance of listening to prayers, of making them my own personal prayer, repeating them in my mind as we learn in the temple.

Another time Elder Robert D. Hales called me and said, “I’m going to be in Laie for a day or two. Would you mind inviting all the religion faculty and their wives together for lunch so we can enjoy each other and have a discussion?” I did it. I was thinking, of course, that I would call these people together and Elder Hales would give a wonderful talk.

Instead, the opposite happened. When the luncheon was over, he said, “Now, you are some of the finest teachers in the Church. You
have had years of teaching experience. Will you share with me those things that have been most successful in your teaching. How do you reach the minds and the hearts of young people?"

At first there was a bit of hesitation among this group, but soon they started talking, while he took notes. The Spirit was present as the teachers shared their ideas. He also invited wives and secretaries to offer suggestions and many good ideas were shared. In the end, Elder Hales stood and gave the sweetest thank-you expression. “You know, next week I have to teach missionaries at the MTC how to teach. I just wanted to consult the experts today, and you have provided me with a lot of ideas. Thank you very much.” (He had about four pages of notes.)


Shumway: Yes, that was very touching to me. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin visited us in Tonga and expressed the same kind of humility. He said, “Now, President Shumway, this is the first time I’ve been in Tonga. Tell me about this place. You need to make sure that I don’t commit any gaffes—that I don’t do anything inappropriate. You need to guide me.” There’s an air of sweetness about that. Of course, I was very gentle in how I guided him because I didn’t feel like he needed much guidance, but I was impressed that he would recognize his newness and that the apostleship, even though it meant authority and responsibility, did not mean he automatically knew everything. He was an eager learner—the same way Elder Hales was an eager learner.

Woods: What general advice would you offer to instructors in Church-sponsored institutions or to teachers in ecclesiastical settings that would enable them to be more effective in the classroom?

Shumway: I would offer the following suggestions. First, we must always remember feelingly that as teachers we are in the service not only of our students but also of the Master Teacher Himself. The entire thrust of our teaching, whether by word or example, must be calculated to draw “all men” (our students) unto Christ. Preparation through study and prayer is essential.

The Lord admonishes us to “seek, knock, and ask.” Besides seeking knowledge of content and teaching techniques, we need to seek, knock, and ask for the ability to see and discern each student as God sees and discerns that student. We need to have God’s love as well as God’s perspective of those whom we teach. So many times we see students only in their irritating or naïve adolescence. We should see them as God sees them, in their divine potential. We should see them
as they are going to be in twenty years, see them both in terms of the Lord’s expectations and the challenges they will have to face. I have encountered former students who are doing absolutely amazing things now—things I never would have guessed when I knew them twenty years ago. As I meet one of them, I say, “Oh, so you’re so-and-so.” And then I remember, “He’s the student who always goofed off in class or who performed below expectation or irritated me by off-the-wall questions.” But now he’s doing this wonderful thing. If I had only seen what he was going to do and be, then I might have been a little more conscientious. I’d have been a little more attentive to his needs. I’d have been a little more prepared myself. So that’s the first thing.

Second, keep your eyes and ears open beyond the lesson. I remember Elder Henry B. Eyring saying, “Do something for the students besides simply talking to them.” Talking, discussing, and even bearing testimony—all those are very important—but do something for them beyond that. Go the extra mile in some way. I remember an experience I had at the University of Virginia in graduate school working on my PhD. I had just humiliated myself by giving a poor class report in a seminar. I felt it was a real flop, and I was still in shock. The following weekend, I received a phone call from the professor. It was about 5:30 Saturday afternoon. He said, “Mr. Shumway, I thought you’d like to know you just received an A on your paper. I thought knowing that might make your weekend.”

What occurred to me was, first, he knew his call would indeed “make my weekend.” Second, I think he was still feeling for me because of my embarrassment in class. His call was his way of remaining completely professorial but showing compassion proactively. For me, the clouds parted and the sun shone. This was the professor who spent the first thirty minutes of the first day of class going through this funny little routine of memorizing our names. He was kind of a bouncing ball. But after that day, we were all on a name basis with him. The importance of that stayed with me.

So we must see students as God sees them, and do things for them beyond the expected. Also we must never forget that the influence and power of one’s life is often greater than the power of the lesson and the discussion—the personal worthiness that shines through the countenance, the tone of one’s expression, the body language.

Years ago, I home taught a man who abused his wife verbally and emotionally. They were on the verge of divorce. One day I confronted him saying he had cut himself off from the Spirit. “How can you say that?” he argued, “I walk into my class, and the Spirit is so
This man was truly skilled in what Mark Twain called “getting up an effect.” He could generate a thrilling performance including student tears. But I believe there is a difference between a person who is truly righteous and living the gospel so the Spirit through them can communicate truth, and a person who in a moment of acting can create a tearful emotion or a sensation. The one is divine instruction; the other is priestcraft.

I’ll never forget a moment at BYU–Provo when I was taking a course from Brother Rodney Turner. He was an intellectual, spirited kind of guy. The “argumentative edge” was often present in his lectures and in the student responses. He said things interestingly and provocatively. One day in the middle of a lecture, he suddenly stopped in his tracks and said, “Brothers and sisters, I feel that I should like to bear my testimony.” It was kind of out of the blue. He bore the sweetest, humblest, most powerful testimony. The thing that touched me was that his action was not orchestrated. It just happened; the Spirit touched him maybe for some person or group in the class. The effect was very powerful.

I also remember listening to a talk by Leonard Arrington in which he did the same thing. He was giving a scholarly paper when suddenly
he stopped and said, “I feel like I must bear my testimony.” In that testimony, as I recall, he said, “All of my experiences with Church history, everything I’ve looked at, everything I’ve read, everything I’ve touched, all of it fits so nicely. And I have found nothing that would affect my testimony negatively in any way; in fact, it’s the opposite.” Perhaps it was the surprise that moved me so much.

Every teacher essentially needs to be in tune with the Spirit and with the Spirit’s timing, to bear testimony so that every young person knows without any doubt how he feels and how he knows the Church is true.

Don’t be discouraged by bored and solemn faces in the classroom. Something is sinking in. I learned that over and over again in teaching religion as well as English. I think about the story President Hinckley told recently about his experience back East as a young Apostle. He came away from a stake conference feeling that he was a failure. But a few years later he met a man who was transformed, whose life was changed by his address in that conference.

Keep track of the stories you tell in classes so that you don’t repeat the same ones from course to course. Students remember them and when a teacher changes or embellishes, particularly a personal narrative, a disconnect occurs and students become cynical. Avoid teaching the “same course” by telling the same stories from course to course. Also, as we should avoid gospel thrillers for sensation’s sake, so should we confirm spiritual events that we share with our classes. When in doubt, leave it out, especially when the narrative tends to aggrandize the teller.

Help students love the scriptures and use them to solve problems. Scriptures are the handbook of life. Help students understand that the scriptures are a truly relevant, pertinent guide for action today. I think students need to know that the scriptures themselves are a miracle. We have a whole library right there in the standard works—annotations, indexes, cross-references, and maps.

Make sure you come prepared for class. An unprepared teacher, a “winger,” is often a plague in the classroom. A story is told of a very bright student who was goofing off in class. Irritated, the teacher said, “Billy, when are you going to come prepared to class?” Billy looked at him and said, “I will if you will.” As the teacher was telling the story later, he said, “First I felt a flash of anger, but then there was a moment of enlightenment, and I realized Billy was right. So instead of kicking him out, I said, ‘Billy, it’s a deal.’” The teacher was true to his word. He said, “After that, I came prepared—overprepared—and I made sure that everybody knew I was reading new things.” Be sure you teach a class in a way that makes it very clear to the students that you’ve reviewed this
material, that you’ve brought additional things into the lesson, and that you’ve thoroughly prepared the lesson. Of course, be open to how the Spirit may guide you to depart from your preparation.

Keep an eye out for the underdog: Don’t let any student get lost. On our campus, we have students from all over the world. Many of them struggle with English, which is their second, third, or fourth language. Their lack of proficiency is humiliating to them. They seek the shadows in the classroom. Our job is to help them perform in the light, as it were.

One of my favorite courses to teach was Introduction to Literature for non-English majors, a General Education course that was scary to a lot of international students who had never taken literature before. I tried to make it as fun as possible, including having a dinner at our home at the conclusion of our section on poetry. This section focused on love poems. One of the requirements was that they each write a love poem to recite the night of our little banquet. One of my Fijian students was absolutely incensed. “I can’t do this. I’ve never done it before. It’s English. Why don’t you let me do something else?” I wouldn’t let him off the hook, saying, “No, you will write a love poem in English. Are you married?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you know something about love, then. I’ve never met a Polynesian who wasn’t a lover in some way.”

When we gathered at our home, each student presented his or her composition, including the reluctant Fijian husband. He entitled his poem, “My Laie Morning.” It was a tribute to his wife, who was sitting right there. He read it with feeling and with intelligence. Later that evening his wife said to me in tears, “President Shumway, I don’t know what grade you’re going to give my husband on this poem, but I just want you to know it has saved our marriage.”

Woods: What does it mean to love the Lord our God with all our mind in an academic setting?

Shumway: One way to love God with all our mind is that we unleash the powers of imagination and analysis in the service of the Lord. When you consider the mental and intellectual energy that successful people put into a business or a hobby, I think we should give that much intellectual vigor and more to a Church assignment or Sunday School class preparation. More than that, we must remember that to love God with all our mind is to love His nature with all of our mind, the majesty of His goodness, the magnitude of His eternal love
for us as His children, and the extent of His mercy. I believe a fully engaged intellect and imagination in exploring that majesty is vital for us, not just as a mental exercise but as a sincere, full-minded striving to become as He is. For to understand God fully is to be like Him (see 1 John 3:1–3). This final realization is the ultimate objective of His plan of happiness for all of us.

I suppose we serve God best in an academic setting when we are in the service of truth and when we help young minds to hunger and thirst after truth, guided by the revelations of God and the counsel of living prophets.

Woods: President Shumway, members of the Kirtland School of the Prophets were told to “seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom” (D&C 88:118). As a former BYU English professor and now as president of BYU–Hawaii, what do you think are some of the best books we should be seeking after?

Shumway: I don’t have a list of the “best” books, but I do believe the best books are the books of scripture. In my mind, everyone needs to thoroughly immerse himself or herself in works of scripture—not just in doctrine per se but even in the language and the stories. The scriptures have some of the most magnificent stories that are truly at the center of human experience.

The older I get, the more I love to read biographies to learn about the lives of great men and great women. It is now a personal requirement for me that any book I read must contain materials that will fill me spiritually and expand my vision and love of humanity. Years ago, as I was contemplating a dissertation topic, I decided to concentrate on a person whom many people had already written about: Robert Browning. I felt that if I were going to spend that much time and that much energy on a project, I wanted to be studying a person who was immensely bright, powerfully intellectual, and deeply religious—though not necessarily in a denominational way. I came away from that scholarly experience feeling as if my own spirit had been richly nourished.

We must not narrow ourselves in what we read. There is so much good and great literature beyond Western literature, including literature from India, Asia, and of the Middle East. For example, I’ve been reading the Qur’an lately. Wonderful editions of the Qur’an are available with great notes. I have become more aware of the spiritual foundations of the descendents of Abraham who are now very important on the international scene.
I’ve read works by other non-Western authors and have been moved by their insights and perspectives. Of course, what education does is to give us new eyes and new perspectives. For example, it’s instructive for us to read about our U.S. history from the point of view of Native Americans. It is valuable to know about colonialism from the point of view of the colonized as well as the colonizers.

But whatever we read we must realize we don’t have the whole story. Modesty, as Will and Ariel Durrant would suggest, is the first requirement of reading and writing history.

Woods: Who are some of the academic-setting mentors you have most appreciated who have exemplified what a “disciple-scholar” should be—those who you think model the scriptural injunction to “seek learning by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118)?

Shumway: There were many. One of my great teachers at BYU–Provo was Bruce Clark, who taught literature. He was a grand, noble human being with a great voice, and he could read poetry to make you feel like the ground was shaking underneath your feet. He was a great mentor to me.

And among my fellow students there, I think of Jeffrey R. Holland, who has a cerebral quality about his approach to scripture, life, and teaching that is extremely refreshing. It doesn’t come across as pedantic in any way. I am uplifted and strengthened by the way he uses language.

Of course, I naturally think of Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Elder Dallin H. Oaks, and Elder Russell M. Nelson. These are men of great intellect who have studied widely, and who are models to me. The scholarship of the gospel and the scholarship of the world as Elder Maxwell would insist must meld and blend. He referred to it as a necessary “bilingualism” all LDS scholars must achieve. You have to be bilingual in the language of scholarship and the language of the gospel.

Woods: Your last comment reminded me of Elder Bruce C. Hafen’s statement that we must have our passport in Athens but our citizenship in Zion.

Shumway: That’s right, and Matthew Arnold put it another way. There needs to be a blending of a strictness of conscience and a spontaneity of consciousness. It’s where Sinai and Olympus come together.

Woods: In your estimation, what does it mean for a person to be truly educated?

Shumway: That’s a loaded question in a way. Becoming educated is exactly that. It’s becoming. It’s a process. And it has to do with atti-
tude. It has to do with the desire to know. It has to do with continually learning. It has to do with a reading life. We talk about one’s prayer life or religious life. I think a person has to have a reading life, something that is essential to becoming a truly educated person.

More than that, becoming educated has to do with the attendant increase in the individual’s quality of character. Learning must be linked to Godlike character development. To be widely read and widely traveled but lacking in fellow feeling and the love God and His children constitutes tragedy. One of the great ironies is that many artists and intellectuals who have given their energies to creating beauty and discovering truth are themselves morally deficient. Truth and beauty are still external to them. They are conduits, not repositories. The intellectual and creative gift passes through them but for whatever reason does not grow into moral fiber. Pride, self-sufficiency, and the three comprehensive lusts—for acclaim, power, and sex—overwhelm them. Goethe’s Faust is a prime example.

**Woods:** As a follow-up question, what do you think are some of the greatest obstacles to becoming truly educated?

**Shumway:** Besides immorality and dishonesty, there are obviously a number of obstacles to the process of becoming educated. One of them certainly is our society’s vast “play culture,” from incessant sports and TV to video games and movies. We are so “anxiously engaged” in amusement that we fill our thoughts and our calendars with activities that keep us away from serious thought and mind improvement. Similarly, the drive for more and more material possessions keeps us poor intellectually and spiritually poor. We become victims of a self-satisfied, narrow provincialism that can snuff out curiosity and harden our opinions into prejudices. There is a provocative Tongan saying that warns against the dangers of a “small fish” perspective. “The lokua [a tiny reef fish] thinks his tidal pool is the vast ocean.”

**Woods:** It has been over a decade since you were inaugurated as the eighth president of BYU–Hawaii. Let’s go back to November 18, 1994, when you were given a charge by President Howard W. Hunter to find better ways to help students learn and to inspire the faculty so they facilitate student success in learning here and throughout their lifetimes. What are some of the things you have done during the past decade to increase student learning and to inspire your faculty?

**Shumway:** Some of these things have to do with what we’ve already talked about. First, we try to help our faculty become sensitive to dif-
different ways of learning and not to judge students by their accent or by their lack of experience. Actually, our students have an amazing impact on our faculty. They have wonderful stories about conversion, suffering, faith. The important things for faculty are awareness, sensitivity, and compassion for our students, for their origins, for their brightness, their potential—and the fact they are the “chosen” of their generation.

We also try to put together a curriculum that is not prejudicial or in favor strictly of Western constructs and culture. We encourage our faculty to learn about the countries from which students come and to travel there. Right now we’re interested in projects that will take the faculty to these countries as mentors for students going back home to do internships.

Also, we have overhauled the entire curriculum giving us stronger programs in General Education and in various majors. We have increased the numbers of students who complete their degree. Five years ago we were graduating about 300 students a year. Most of them had excessive hours—sometimes thirty or forty hours beyond what was required for graduation. We were restrictive in accepting transfer credit. Many majors were overloaded with requirements. We trimmed all of that down to a 120-hour, four-year curriculum. With General Education requirements, major classes, religion courses, and eighteen to twenty hours of elective credit, students can still graduate in 120 hours. We can say to students that if they stay on task, taking fifteen hours a semester, we guarantee they can graduate in four years. Now, that doesn’t mean we don’t have flexibility to allow them to take more, but it means that we graduate more students faster.

Since the beginning of the school, the return of our international students to their home areas to build up Zion has been at the core of our mission as a university. We have given new impetus and energy to that mission in our efforts to create for them a “culture of returnability.” That is, from the moment of their recruitment and admission until they graduate, these students receive the mentoring and encouragement to return.

An international internship program has been put into place to allow students, after completing 80 to 90 credit hours, to return to their countries as interns, to work in settings that allow them to reconnect with their home economy and to establish networks with local alumni and businesses. Over 130 international students a year take advantage of this internship program. Significantly, it is almost entirely funded by donors who are committed to help our students return. Also a new placement office has been created and staffed with a director and internship coordinator to help facilitate the goals of returnability.
Woods: You are president of the most ethnically diverse school per capita in the United States. With that setting in mind, I was intrigued with the charge that President Howard W. Hunter gave you at your inauguration especially when he referred to this campus as a “laboratory for living.” I was aware of President Marion G. Romney referring BYU–Hawaii as a living laboratory. Anyway, President Hunter charged you to find better ways to allow the diversity of cultures from which students come and to which they go to be an effective and important part of the educational resources of this campus. My questions are along with what you’ve just said: What are some of the other ways you consider BYU–Hawaii a living laboratory? And in what ways does the cultural diversity serve as an educational resource?

Shumway: The “living laboratory” phrase comes from Elder Romney in his address at the dedication of the Aloha Center in 1973, in which he says that we are a living laboratory in which the teachings of the Master Teacher will be infused in our student body in such a way that the campus will become a model for the whole world; and that what we do in a small way on this campus, the world must do in a large way if we’re ever to have peace on earth. That’s the context. So BYU–Hawaii is a living laboratory where people of many cultures experience a transformation, where they shed prejudices, misunderstandings, and historical baggage, if you will, and learn about the world from their fellow students.

A case in point: a young man came here from Korea whose father was conscripted into the Japanese army. The father hated the Japanese and taught his children to hate them. The young man came to BYU–Hawaii, where we have a significant number of Japanese students. He wondered before he arrived, “Am I going to fit in over there? I hope they don’t force me to mingle with Japanese.”

He came anyway, and in a short time, his best friends were Japanese. He liked them so much that he decided to take courses in the Japanese language. He became fluent in Japanese and ended up being a Japanese guide at the Polynesian Culture Center, where he took Japanese tourists around telling them about Polynesia and speaking to them in their own language. He told me, “My life has transformed. I came with a certain mindset. I now have new eyes. My life and attitude are changed at BYU–Hawaii.”

In another instance, a new student from Utah called her mom the day after she arrived and said, “Mom, do you know what they’ve done? They’ve given me a roommate who can’t speak English! I want to go
“home.” Well, she stayed and loved it. Yes, we see some pain and consternation in this “laboratory,” but we also see a lot of learning as a result of students’ being put in a situation where they are eating, rooming, studying, and worshiping with people who have a different skin color, accent, or dialect and who eat different foods. As you can see, BYU–Hawaii is a laboratory. This is where we are gaining experience and learning—not only to tolerate each other and get along, but also to appreciate and love others across cultures. I’m also thinking of the Japanese student who became an expert in the Hawaiian chant and the Korean student who is a fine Tahitian dancer at the Polynesian Cultural Center.

A few years ago, Dr. Hazel Symonette, a consultant to a number of U.S. universities on race relations, visited BYU–Hawaii. She had heard about the campus’s diversity and was curious. Dr. Symonette told me later, she could hardly believe what she saw. The wide involvement and inclusion of all our students was amazing to her, in student government, as well as the social and spiritual events on campus. She intended on a one day visit, but stayed four days. She went to a devotional, attended a ball, visited classes and, in the end, she told me there’s no place like BYU–Hawaii anywhere else in the United States. She said that many universities have what she calls “gilded mission statements” about diversity. But BYU–Hawaii walks the talk. It’s a living reality here.

The living laboratory idea is significant in that the gospel of Jesus Christ is at the center. The gospel is the overriding culture.

There are many elements in various cultures, including the American culture, that people must discard when they join the Church. In fact, a Chinese, Cambodian, or Samoan probably doesn’t give up any more cultural things than an American does when any of them joins the Church. By “culture,” in America, I’m talking about the “liberal” culture and the “party culture,” sports on Sunday, drinking alcohol, gambling, aggressive individualism and so forth—things that many people think of when they define America as the empire of indulgence. To move out of that into a gospel culture requires almost the same kind of jarring transformation for an American as for a person from Cambodia or China. In fact, for an international convert, in some ways it’s easier. We see this in China, for example. China is a communist country, but people over there are hungering for spirituality. They are yearning and eager for spiritual change, but unfortunately the invasion of American goods has tended to promote the indulgent side of our culture rather than the spiritual side, which is disheartening.
**Woods:** You mentioned that things work quite well when the gospel is at the center of bringing these cultures together. But what happens when people fall into the trap of sifting the gospel through their cultures rather than their cultures through the gospel?

**Shumway:** That may cause a problem for some. But in the end, it is quite easy to understand behavior in a gospel culture. Take the issue of violence. Some cultures allow wife beating and heavy spanking of children. It is seen as the husband or father’s role—the father’s responsibility. Not so in a gospel culture. We have learned that a person’s trying to hide behind his culture or excusing bad behavior by pointing to his culture is best addressed in a straightforward manner.

Sometimes false history is an issue. For example, years ago, there were some fights between our Samoan and Tongans students. One perpetrator tried to minimize the confrontation by saying, “Well, we were just repeating history. Tongans and Samoans have always been enemies from the time Tonga ruled Samoa centuries ago.” Well, I pointed out that that was false history. Tonga and Samoa have been on good terms all these years. In fact, the present royal dynasty in Tonga, the Tu’i Kanokupolu (king, body from Upolu) descended from Samoan ancestors. The Samoans and Tongans have interacted peacefully and intermarried for years. The present king’s son Ma’atu married a Samoan princess, granddaughter of Samoa’s Head of State, Mālietoa.
I still cherish a moment in our home with students from Southeast Asia. They told of their conversion to the gospel and shared their testimonies. One student from Cambodia said, “I sit here tonight between two traditional enemies, a Vietnamese and a Thai. Cambodia as you know is sandwiched between these mighty people and has suffered intensely over the centuries from their aggression. But in the church and at BYU–Hawaii we are brothers and sisters. I feel perfectly safe. It seems like I represent all of Cambodia sitting between Thailand and Vietnam. I hope that love and peace will exist forever as I feel it tonight between our peoples.”

Sometimes certain cultural mores are so powerful that a student finds himself in a serious dilemma, whether to follow the dictates of his cultural conscience or his “gospel conscience.” For example, in Polynesia, if a man’s sister or her children makes a request, he feels duty bound to meet that request no matter what the cost or inconvenience. Thus, if I am a Tongan supervisor at PCC and I have a cousin whose mother is my dad’s sister, it means that anything I have she has access to. And so the cousin comes and says, “Uncle, I really want to go to the luau and see the show tonight, but I don’t have any money.” I let him in, which is viewed by the PCC as an act of dishonesty, but in my culture, I’m absolutely obligated to help. I can’t say no. So in desperation I let go of one value to embrace another.

That’s why intermarriages can be very rocky unless the persons really understand each other’s culture. For example, the Asian wife may discover that their whole savings is gone because her Polynesian husband has withdrawn the money to buy airfare for his parents who wanted to go visit somebody. They called and said, “Get us tickets.” The husband could not say no. That’s just one picture.

Woods: Sounds like the gospel culture is the key. In 2005, we’re having the Jubilee Commemoration, which I know you have probably been doing a lot of reading about as a reflection of the last fifty years of the history of the Church College of Hawaii and BYU–Hawaii. If you were to project fifty years into the future, what do you see? What do you think BYU–Hawaii is going to be like fifty years from now, or what would you like to see? What do you envision in the future for this place?

Shumway: I’m not sure I can envision a physical university in terms of size, numbers of students, and so on. I think we are going to grow, and I think we are going to be more and more critical to the unfolding of the Restoration across the world. I truly believe the campus will continue to provide a model education for diverse people who come
together in one faith, one Lord, and one baptism. I believe that BYU–Hawaii will be considered more and more as an ideal spot for the kind of education that will facilitate peace and harmony around the world. I believe that BYU–Hawaii will also continue to produce programs, faculty, students, and graduates who will be strong in the gospel, have strong testimonies, and have strong commitments to living the gospel. I believe that if the university and PCC leaders will continue to leverage the amazing power of the original vision by President David O. McKay, which he has articulated in many ways, as well as follow the counsel of living prophets the university will continue to increase its influence “for good toward the establishment of peace internationally.”

The work to do is gradually unfolding. We have just barely scratched the surface with China, Japan, and India. I believe that BYU–Hawaii must maintain, along with the community of Laie and the Polynesian Cultural Center, the core leadership and the kinds of students who are fully committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has to be focused on not only righteous intent but righteous living in actuality. I believe people who come here need to have a sense of vision, and they have to believe it. President McKay said that “no person should teach on this campus who does not have an assurance, not a mere belief, but an assurance that God has had His hand on this valley from the very beginning.” In other words, you have to embrace the vision. The vision of the campus, the vision of President McKay, has to become part of your own private vision if you are going to teach here and if you are going to be able to discern who these students are, what they mean to the Church, and what they are going to do in the world. I think he has laid the groundwork that will help BYU–Hawaii avoid becoming what other universities have become—that is, clones of each other in a world of indulgence, materialism, and mutated individualism that discards the need to engage in the kind of love and inclusion that we have here on this campus.

**Woods:** If you could write your own epitaph, what would you want it to say about Eric B. Shumway?

**Shumway:** One of the things you learn when you are working in a setting like this is that the Lord makes things happen. The worst thing you can do is try to take any credit for this or that. But I hope I can be one of the many who served on this campus who is considered to be a person who did his best. Whatever modicum of success there might have been, it is the way the Lord works—not just through me but through everybody. I do know that we all are on the Lord’s errand and we have great responsibility. And with that great responsibility,
we have great accountability. Whatever I do professionally, I am going to have to account for it spiritually because Heavenly Father does not distinguish between professional and personal responsibility. It is all about serving His children and preparing them for eternal life.
“Out of the Dust”

*Elder Paul V. Johnson*

_Elder Paul V. Johnson, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, is administrator of Religious Education and Elementary and Secondary Education._

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The Book of Mormon has been brought forth out of the dust and made available to millions of people on the earth in our day. It has been a powerful spiritual influence in the lives of countless individuals over the past 175 years.

Each of us has had our own feelings about this book. It has affected our lives so much. We view the gospel more clearly because we have studied it. We have all felt the Spirit confirm to our souls the truths found therein. In fact, a person’s feelings about the Book of Mormon might be a little like the feelings of a person in love. People in love feel like no one else in the whole world could have feelings as strong as they have. They view their experience as being unique.

We might have similar feelings about our testimony of the Book of Mormon. We might feel as if we have had such a strong witness and loved the book so much that no one else could feel quite so strongly—that our experience is unique. In actuality, our personal testimony of the book is probably not stronger than all others, but it is true that our own experience is unique. The experiences each of us has had with the Book of Mormon haven’t happened quite the same way with any other person who has walked the earth.
The Lord’s Hand in Preservation and Translation

In order for anyone to gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon, he or she must read or hear its words. The Lord prophesied that “his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation” (Moroni 10:28). In the twenty-first century we have the words of Nephi, Mormon, Moroni, and others from ancient times. The Lord described these prophets as “crying from the dead” and “speaking out of the dust” (Moroni 10:27). The story of how we received their words clearly shows the Lord’s hand in preserving and bringing forth this record. Think of all the years those records needed to be preserved. Some of the records were written a very long time before Mormon’s plates were buried in Cumorah. Speaking of the records he was entrusting to his son Helaman, Alma explained that they should “be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. . . . And now behold, if they are kept they must retain their brightness; yea, and they will retain their brightness; yea, and also shall all the plates which do contain that which is holy writ” (Alma 37:4–5).

We know that from the time Moroni buried the plates until the time Joseph translated them, those plates did retain their brightness. Today there are exciting developments in restoring ancient records. With modern technology, people are better able to decipher characters that were written with ink that has faded or from parchment, papyrus, or paper that has deteriorated. Amazingly, it has even been possible to read some documents that have been burned or carbonized. The world seems fascinated at the preservation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but even those records are now fragmented remains. But the plates that came out of Cumorah were not fragments. There were no deteriorated parts. Those plates had retained their brightness both physically and symbolically. Every character was there exactly as Moroni or Jacob or Mormon engraved it. Those plates were not faded or worn or corroded.

In addition to preserving the record, the Lord was also involved in its translation from the ancient language. Speaking of Joseph Smith, the Lord said that he had “power from on high . . . to translate the Book of Mormon” (D&C 20:8). It is no wonder the Prophet Joseph called it “the most correct of any book on earth.” As a result, we have a book that has helped change millions of lives and is destined to influence millions more.

Since the time when the Book of Mormon was translated, the Lord’s words have begun to “hiss forth unto the ends of the earth” (2 Nephi 29:2). It has been over 170 years since that first edition was printed, and the word of the Lord continues to hiss forth. President
Ezra Taft Benson spoke to the Church about “flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon.” We are making headway in making this book available to the world.

When the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed in 1830, five thousand copies came off the press; 170 years later, in the year 2000, over 5,600,000 copies of the Book of Mormon were printed. That’s over 1,100 times as many copies printed in 2000 than were printed in 1830.

From 1830 to 1981, 152 years, there were over 27 million copies printed. During the next nine years there were nearly that many printed, and in the last ten years there have been almost 50 million copies printed.

It took the workers at the Grandin press seven months to print five thousand copies. In our day, the new Timson web press prints that same amount, the equivalent of five thousand copies, in less than forty minutes. From 1830 to the present there have been nearly 105 million total copies printed. That is a lot of books!

**International Translations**

It isn’t just the number of books being printed that counts either. In order for people around the world to be able to read it, they must have it in a language they can understand. The continued translation process of the Book of Mormon is a noteworthy modern miracle! We are all familiar with the exciting news that there were one hundred working temples in the year 2000.

A milestone that didn’t get as much publicity was the fact that by the end of the year 2000 the Book of Mormon, or selections from the book, had been translated into one hundred languages. In fact, consider the names of the languages that were completed in the year 2000: Estonian, Igbo, Latvian, Armenian-East, Amharic, Xhosa, and American Sign Language.

The Lord has been involved in the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon in these other languages—not just the English at the time of Joseph Smith. People have been raised up by the Lord who have been able to do the translation, and they have been inspired in their work. If all of the stories were known of the great miracles of translation into these other languages, we would have other powerful witnesses of the Lord’s hand in the work.

The story of the Book of Mormon translation into Estonian is an example. Sister Aimo Teemant and her husband fled from Estonia to Sweden in 1944, leaving some members of their family behind. In 1951 they
met Latter-day Saint missionaries, and in 1952 they joined the Church. One night in September of 1953, Sister Teemant had an extremely vivid dream in which she was again sitting in the kitchen of her home in Estonia. As she sat there, her mother came in from another room with the German, Swedish, and Finish editions of the Book of Mormon in her hand. She told Sister Teemant that these languages were not enough and that she demanded the Book of Mormon in Estonian. The dream made such a strong impression on Sister Teemant that she began translating the Book of Mormon into Estonian the next morning.

Mail from the Teemants’ family members in Estonia first began to reach them in 1956. One of the initial letters they received told of the death of Sister Teemant’s mother on September 20, 1953. That was the same night Sister Teemant had had the dream. Soon after that, the Teemants received permission to immigrate to the United States. Because of frequent moves and the responsibility of raising her children, she worked only occasionally on the Book of Mormon translation. Her husband retired in 1982, and they moved to Provo, Utah.

In the October 1986 general conference of the Church, President Benson gave his great admonition to use the Book of Mormon and remove the condemnation that the neglect of the book had brought upon the Church. Sister Teemant knew that she must finish her work and allow the Estonians to read the Book of Mormon in their own tongue. She began her translation again in earnest. She finished translating the last verses in December 1988. After an extensive review, the Estonian Book of Mormon was published in February 2000.

The Latvian version of the Book of Mormon was published before the end of the year 2000. In January of 2001, Gvido Senkans, who serves as district president and was translator of the Book of Mormon into Latvian, scheduled a visit to the Leipaja Branch. The Saints in this branch had not yet seen the new book that had recently been published. President Senkans had a copy with him to present to the branch. As he began to speak, he bore testimony of the Book of Mormon and then held up a Latvian copy. A loud gasp and soft cheer came from the audience in perfect unison.

After the meeting, the members rushed the stand to see the new book. They formed a line and passed the book along. They handled it like fine crystal. Most of them simply rubbed the cover with their hands, especially the gold lettering. An old women waited her turn to hold the book, and then she turned to President Senkans and asked, “May I open it?” Tears flowed down her face while she read the first words of 1 Nephi.
A group of young women were some of the first to hurry to the stand to see the book. One of the people on the stand took a picture of the girls as they approached the book. Their excitement was visible. Can you imagine the impact if all our students felt the excitement for the Book of Mormon that these young women felt? We want all our students to feel this way about the Book of Mormon and the gospel it contains.

To think of all the work and dedication and time and money put forth for the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon is inspiring. We know that the reason for these sacrifices boils down to the great power its message can have in individual lives. Remember that it is no blessing to simply have the book on a bookshelf. The promise is that a person “would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” Notice that the promise entails more than just having or even diligently studying the book. That isn’t even enough. We must “abide by its precepts.” We hope every person in the world gets a chance to read the book and find out for themselves of its truthfulness and to live its teachings.

The Power of the Book of Mormon

I think the Book of Mormon, as we have it, is analogous to the records Alma spoke of to Helaman when he said:

> They have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.

> Yea, I say unto you, were it not for these things that these records do contain, which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance; that is, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer. (Alma 37:8–9)

We have a great opportunity to be involved in this work in our own families and in our classrooms. We too can participate in enlarging memories, convincing so many thousands, and bringing them knowledge unto salvation, even bringing them to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer!

I wonder how many thousands and hundreds of thousands of seminary and institute students through the years have gained a love for the Book of Mormon because of their own teacher’s testimony and feelings about that book.
Before I went on a mission, I was a stake missionary on BYU campus. We were teaching another student who was my age, and my companion asked me to learn the discussion about the Book of Mormon so that I could teach it to this young man after the Christmas break. I worked on memorizing the discussion, but what seemed more important to me was to be able to bear testimony of the truthfulness of the book to my friend. I spent a lot of that Christmas vacation reading the Book of Mormon and praying. As I was finishing the book, I knelt down and prayed to the Lord that I could know for sure that it was true. I had always felt good about the book and felt it was true, but this situation seemed different, since I was testifying to someone else. I had to know.

I did receive a witness that day when I prayed. It was a strong confirmation to me, and I was able to testify to my friend about the Book of Mormon. Less than a year later, I was in the mission field in Norway, and my companion had borne his testimony to an investigator about the Book of Mormon. The man turned to me and asked me if I could say the same. I was able to testify without hesitation because I did know. I remember walking back to our apartment that cold night and being so thankful that the Lord had answered my prayers so clearly the year before when I wanted to know about the truthfulness of the book.

I know the Book of Mormon is true. I testify that the Prophet Joseph Smith translated it by the gift and power of God. The people we read about are real. We may get to meet them. We may get to meet Alma and Nephi and Sariah and Abish someday. In fact, Moroni closes the Book of Mormon record by declaring: “And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?” (Moroni 10:27).

The plates are real. They are physical plates. They were seen and handled by a number of witnesses in our dispensation. The stories are real. The book is not just some extensive allegory, as some have suggested. The gospel that is so plainly taught in the book is also real. The Being we are taught to have faith in is real. Jesus Christ did live, and He did visit this hemisphere after His Resurrection. The Atonement is very real.

The remission of sins is not, as Korihor claimed, the “effect of a frenzied mind” (Alma 30:16). It is, as Alma testified, an actual washing and purifying of our garments “through the blood of” our Redeemer.
(see Alma 5:21–22). I am thankful for those people in ancient times and in modern times who put forth so much effort so that we could have that powerful book be part of our lives.

Our efforts to help students and families read the Book of Mormon and “abide by its precepts” will be greatly rewarded. May teaching the gospel powerfully, as it is found in the Book of Mormon, be one way that we, the Church Educational System, make a major contribution to the building up of the kingdom of God.

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Notes

3. Smith, History of the Church, 4:461; see also introduction to the Book of Mormon.
Jesus, the Master Teacher, skillfully used questions to challenge listeners to ponder.

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library

© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
“Only when you have questions are you really thinking and learning. . . . No questions equal no understanding, superfluous questions equal superfluous understanding, unclear questions equal unclear understanding.” Clearly questions initiate much of the learning that takes place in gospel classrooms. Questions can also determine the depth, breadth, and length of the learning, as well as the level of participation and enjoyment. And they can even invite revelation into the hearts and minds of teachers and students.

Learning to Ask Better Search Questions

Let’s consider a scripture. In Matthew 4:1–11, students could be asked to search or look for the answer to the question, “What did Jesus use to overcome temptation?” This question is okay but somewhat limits the things that could be discovered. Students may answer, “He used scripture.” The limited scope of this question could cause students to miss the broader perspective and possibly miss the intent of the inspired author. Because of the limited possible responses, it would also limit student participation and leave many things undiscovered.

A better approach would be, “Students, look in Matthew 4:1–11 for the answer to the following question: How did Jesus overcome Satan’s temptations?” This question will lead students to discover more. They may answer, “He quoted scriptures; He immediately repelled Satan’s attacks; He refused to listen and sent Satan away.” However, an even better request would be, “Students, look in Matthew 4:1–11 for what
Jesus did to prepare for His ministry.” This question allows for greater breadth of discovery. The students will find that Jesus prayed and fasted to draw close to His Father. He also overcame temptation by using the scriptures and immediately resisting Satan’s advances. They will also find that He received revelation and was taught by the Spirit.

To gain a better understanding of asking effective search questions, let us look at two different lesson plans for Matthew 4:1–11. After reading Matthew 4:1–11, carefully compare the lessons and their questions. See if you can determine why the lesson on the right is better than the lesson on the left.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principle:</strong> The scriptures provide power to help us overcome temptations.</td>
<td><strong>Principle:</strong> Drawing near to God prepares us for His service and brings His divine power into our lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness: Matthew 4:1. Find what is wrong in this verse. See JST.</td>
<td>Search: Matthew 4:1, 17. Look for why Jesus went into the wilderness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search: Matthew 4:3-10. Look for what Jesus used to overcome Satan’s temptations.</td>
<td>Search: Matthew 4:1-11. Look for the answer to the following question: What are some things Jesus does to draw close to his Father? Find at least five ways. List on the board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search: David O. McKay said that temptations could be divided into three categories: appetite, pride and vanity, and riches and power. Read Matthew 4:3-10, and match the following temptations to their categories: Matthew 4:3-4  Pride and Vanity Matthew 4:5-7  Riches and Power Matthew 4:8-10  Appetite</td>
<td>Analyze: Choose an item from the list on the board. How do you think the item you chose helps a person draw closer to God?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze: Name a sin, and then choose the category you think it fits. Why?</td>
<td>Read David O. McKay’s quote in the teacher resource manual; also, cross-reference Hebrews 4:15. What additional understanding do you gain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply: Which category do you think Satan uses on you the most? What have you decided to do so you can overcome Satan’s temptations?</td>
<td>Apply: Jesus set the example of how to draw close to God and how to obtain His divine enabling power. What have you learned from His example that can be applied in your life?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you ponder the sequence and development of the above lessons, you will readily see that the lesson on the right creates more opportunities for the students to discover, participate, and to reach greater depths of understanding than with the lesson on the left. The search questions
determine how thoroughly a scripture is explored. They may also determine the level of student participation. Learning to ask great search questions is really not difficult; the process just takes preparation and practice. First, begin with a thorough reading and study of the scripture block. Second, determine what it is you feel God wants the students to know. Third, ponder and then write a question that invites students to search the scriptures. A teacher should always remember that “the questions we ask determine where our thinking goes. Only when our thinking leads us somewhere important can we learn anything of value to us.”

Consider another example that compares two different ways to search a story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Lesson A, John 11</th>
<th>Sample Lesson B, John 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principle: Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life</strong></td>
<td><strong>Principle: Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness: Hold up the picture of Lazarus.</td>
<td>Readiness: Have two students come forward, hold a picture of Lazarus, and tell his story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search: John 11:1-2. Individually look for who is sick.</td>
<td>Search: John 11:4, 6, 17, 39-40. Look for important details we have not yet identified so we can understand the significance of Lazarus’s story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search: Bible Dictionary. Individually find out who Lazarus is. Share your answer with your neighbor.</td>
<td>Analyze: Why do you think Jesus purposely waited before going to Lazarus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search: John 11:4-7. Individually read to discover what Jesus did.</td>
<td>Search/Analyze: Look for what is taking place at this moment in time. Why is it happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze: Discuss the following question with a partner. How do you think you would have felt if you had witnessed the raising of Lazarus?</td>
<td>Analyze: Why do you think the raising of Lazarus caused such different reactions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply: Discuss as a group and be prepared to report on what we can learn from this story.</td>
<td>Apply: What lessons can be learned from the story of Lazarus? Carefully read John 11:25-27; it contains two testimonies: Jesus’s and Martha’s. Write in your journals your own testimony of Jesus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lesson on the left searches for details, facts, and information in the story. This type of search is not very engaging or inspiring.
The student answers will be short and factual. The lesson on the right allows students to participate and teach what they already know. It is usually better to tell the story or have students tell the story, and then the searching for additional information can lead to the discovery of principles of truth that will change lives. The above examples show how questions can be used to organize a complete lesson, how writing the lesson helps the teacher keep the lesson logical, and how pondering the questions and the students’ possible answers helps in crafting questions that are very effective in the classroom.

Teaching with Questions

This type of simple, organized lesson plan has tremendous flexibility. Notice the previous lesson plans for John 11. The lesson on the left indicates in italics how the teacher will have the students search, analyze, or apply, Whereas in the lesson on the right, the how is noticeably absent. As a teacher begins teaching with questions, he or she will usually have to plan how the students will find, report, and discuss answers. Each portion of the lesson (search, analyze, apply) can be done individually, in pairs or in small groups, or as a class. After considerable practice in preparing and teaching with questions, the teacher’s confidence and skill will improve. The teacher is now prepared to read the class and then respond according to need.³ Does the class need to be more involved? Then answer the question in pairs or small groups. Does the class need to be settled down? Then individually find or write answers. If the class is in good order, decide what would be the best way to get students to deepen their understanding and feelings or to have the students teach each other. Each type of question can be handled according to the needs of the class and the guidance of the Spirit so that the same lesson could be taught in different ways to different classes. The same scripture block is covered, and the same questions are used; however, the student focus is tailored to each class. Teachers who read the class and respond appropriately are able to keep the class participating, discovering, and learning. Thus, a very enjoyable and edifying classroom experience is maintained throughout the entire class hour.

“The role of a . . . teacher is much like an orchestra conductor who is there to keep order and give general direction and instruction. An orchestra conductor, however, does not produce the music. A good gospel teacher uses effective questions as a conductor uses a baton.”⁴ The questions are the framework around which other activities are woven. These questions bring to the classroom a high degree of student participation. As Elder Richard G. Scott has taught, “Participation
weaves the gospel into [students’] very character.” Thus, the teacher’s dominance decreases in the classroom, and the students’ speaking, sharing, and learning increases.

**Learning to Ask Better Analytical Questions**

Analytical questions are one way a teacher can carefully orchestrate understanding to all the students so that application can more easily be made. A teacher who desires to strengthen the analysis part of the lesson needs to look first at the search. Whenever thorough searching of the scriptures has occurred, the analysis is as simple as asking students what they think. One way to strengthen analytical questions is to make them more student friendly and more open, allowing for multiple responses. The teacher could ask, “What does it mean to . . . ?” or “What do you think it means to . . . ?” The second example will get more response because you are allowing the students to share their opinion rather than looking for the “right answers.” Wording the question so that several answers are possible also helps. For example, “What are the differences . . . ?” will get more participation than “What is the difference . . . ?” The lesson in Matthew 4 has two very good examples. Looking for what Jesus used to overcome temptation is singular. The responses will be factual and short. However, looking for how Jesus overcame temptation allows for multiple answers, opinions, and ideas. Some questions that almost always help students come to an understanding are “What do you think?” “Why do you think?” “What are some ways?” or “What reasons can you think of?”

Using small groups and pairs is very effective in the analysis part of the lesson. Have the students search, mark, think, or write individually before they are asked to show, share, or teach a partner, a small group, or the class. Younger students sometimes have a difficult time getting and staying on task. When students are given time to process and gather their thoughts, more of them will participate, and the responses will have more substance. Having the question written on the board makes the task very clear and helps students to think a little more and a little deeper. Having students search different scriptures or having them look for different things sets up a situation where they have something to teach others. The previous lesson on the right for John 11 has an excellent example. Each row of students has something of importance that their classmates needed and did not receive. It also helps a teacher cover more material and still maintain a student focus.
Remember the importance of knowing why a teacher should ask analytical questions. They help the teacher see what the students understand so that more clarification can be given where needed. They also encourage more participation and facilitate students’ talking, sharing, and even teaching each other. Finally, analytical questions bring understanding to all who are in the class so that personal application can be made by each individual student. Remember that application cannot occur until understanding is achieved.

**Learning to Ask Better Application Questions**

Once understanding has taken place, application is more easily made. However, asking questions that help students apply gospel principles has some unique challenges. It can become boring, monotonous, and routine. It can also invade the students’ personal lives if not done with care and wisdom. If asked properly, application questions can inspire, cause action, and even invite personal revelation and deep commitment. These questions can help bridge the gap between the past and the present. Application questions help take the gospel deep into the minds and hearts of the students. When carefully asked, these questions identify principles of the gospel so clearly that students leave the classroom knowing what was taught, what it means, and how it applies to their lives.

A few helpful suggestions make these questions better and very effective. Do not ask the same application question day after day. Do not have the students write in their journals every day to apply the lesson. Do not ask students to share personal, private things, especially in the areas of personal sins and repentance. Two kinds of applications are possible: general and personal. Both are very effective. The following are some examples of various ways to ask application questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 4:1-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you learn from Jesus’s example that can be applied to your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have you decided to do so you can overcome Satan’s temptations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think of something you would like to overcome, and write the answer to this question: What do you feel God would like you to do so you can be successful?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### John 11

**What can we learn from this story?**

This is a general application question. It will allow students to teach and testify to each other and make sure all the students understand and can apply the principle.

**Carefully read John 11:25-27; it contains two testimonies: Jesus’s and Martha’s. After pondering, what will you write in your journal about your own testimony of Jesus Christ?**

This is a personal application question. It allows time for each student to think and ponder. Appropriately, students can be asked to share answers in pairs, in small groups, or to the whole class.

**Will you share a time when you felt the same as Martha because of the power of the Spirit?**

Some will not have had this experience, so asking for volunteers to answer is the best approach. This can greatly influence the other students because a testimony will be shared. It will bring to mind a spiritual experience. This question should be asked only if the classroom climate is conducive to the Holy Ghost.

Questions that promote application can be answered by the class, in small groups, in pairs, or individually. If shared with a small group, some students could afterward be asked to tell the whole class. Likewise when students are asked individually to think, ponder, or write, a few can be asked to share their answers with the class. The teacher should be cautious not to cause students embarrassment in sharing personal thoughts. The better the scriptures have been searched and analyzed, the easier the application will come. Many times application will happen spontaneously because the students have come to understand and feel so deeply about the principle being considered. When students make application, asking an application question is not necessary. In fact, it will be counterproductive. Often, teachers will lecture or pontificate during this point of the lesson. Simple words of testimony from the teacher validating the students’ comments are usually most effective.

A teacher can help make the application in several other ways. The teacher can simply (1) tell the students one way the principle could be applied, (2) share a story that illustrates the application, or (3) bear testimony of the truth of the principle being taught. When using these three ways, the teacher is assuming that the application question has already been created in the minds of the students. The question is being answered without being asked. As with many other things, overuse of these three ways of making application becomes a teacher-centered approach. However, occasional use is effective and adds variety.
Overtly asking application questions does some very important things. It causes the eternal principles of truth to be clearly identified, and students leave the class knowing what was taught that day. The answering of the question facilitates students’ teaching and testifying to their classmates of the truthfulness of gospel principles. These expressions of belief and sharing of ideas powerfully affect others in the class. The student comments are mini-testimonies that are often accompanied by the Holy Ghost. Also, application questions liken the scripture record to the students’ personal lives. The scriptures have meaning that relates not just to a few bright students but to all the students in the class.

Selecting, Writing, and Identifying Principles

One of the most important aspects of successfully teaching with questions is choosing the principles and doctrines that will be explored. To be able to formulate and ask effective search, analyze, and apply questions, a teacher must first know what he or she wants the students to know. Sometimes a teacher may have difficulty in putting a gospel principle into words. Many teachers have found the following sequence facilitates the process. After thoroughly reading the scripture, ask: “What is it that I want my students to know?” This helps formulate the desired outcome in the teacher’s mind. Next, consult the curriculum. The curriculum helps the teacher check his or her focus, ideas, and doctrinal purity. Now, the teacher is ready to determine what students need to search so they can discover what the teacher has determined he or she wants the students to know. The analysis and application questions are now rather easy to complete. This thinking, reasoning, searching process helps a teacher to know the material even better. Last, the teacher is now ready to put into words the principle that is to be taught.

A principle of the gospel is a truth that has eternal significance. Many times the wording of the scripture is very inspiring and can be used for the principle statement exactly as written. There is power in the Lord’s language, such as “I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16), “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22), or “Put on the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11). Sometimes a teacher must formulate a statement of principle in his or her own words because it is not clearly or concisely stated in the scripture. In Romans 3–5, a summary statement of principle could be worded as follows: “Both faith and works are necessary to receive the full measure of the Atonement.” Another example from 1 Corinthians 12–13 could be written as follows: “Spiritual gifts are given to the Saints in God’s true Church.” Two important things to remember are the fol-
lowing: (1) The principle needs to be a truth that has eternal significance to the students of the class, and (2) The principle needs to be worded as clearly and concisely as possible. The principle affects every aspect of the lesson, including how the teacher words and asks the search, analysis, and application questions. Principle statements that are true to the scripture text and that are packaged for student application cause the questions to be relevant and effective. They give the lesson meaning and power. And they even invite revelation!

Teachers have several ways to make sure the principle is identified during a lesson. The principle can be written on the board, it can be written in the scriptures, or the class together can complete a sentence so it is a statement of principle. Students can be invited to share principles they have discovered. They can select from a list the principle statement they relate to the most. Taking the time to ask a question so the principle is clearly identified connects all the dots. This identification helps place eternal truths into each student’s memory so it can sink deep into their hearts and minds. Identifying the principle more than once during the class hour can also help in achieving the desired clarity.

**Learner Readiness**

After the lesson has been prepared, a short readiness item to draw the students into the scripture can be formulated. Readiness items can be very helpful in creating and maintaining the proper classroom climate. The best readiness is short and creates within the students the desire to search the scriptures for answers. The readiness activity should be created after the main concepts are identified because it will have a tendency to overpower the lesson and direct what is taught. The principles the teacher has selected should determine the searching, thinking, understanding, and applying of the scriptures.

**Questions that Improve the Devotional**

The devotional also becomes more effective when the right questions are asked and answered. “There is a casual way . . . and a careful way” to conduct the devotional. Having a student assigned to give the scripture or thought has been a tradition or mainstay of seminary and institute for years. A more careful way to conduct the devotional is to have several students volunteer to read a scripture from their recent personal reading and have them share answers to the questions of “Why do you like the scripture?” or “How does the scripture help you?” and
then close in the name of Jesus Christ. This carefulness in the devotional adds a dimension that seems to bring the Spirit in a powerful way. Allowing two or three students to share at the beginning of each class is very inspiring to their fellow classmates. The percentage of students personally reading scriptures will increase. The students are exercising their agency and sharing personal feelings about the scriptures, which in turn invites the Spirit. This is a simple change that is brought about by asking a better question, and the results are wonderful.

Conclusion

Because “the best teachers are usually those who understand the relationship between learning and asking questions,” this article has attempted to do the following:

1. Deepen teachers’ understanding of the importance of questions in the gospel classroom.
2. Cause teachers to gain the desire, resolve, and commitment to improve their questions.
3. Help teachers see how to develop better questioning skills, and then to do it.
4. Help teachers to invite revelation into their classrooms and into the students’ lives.

Teaching by using questions causes the gospel to go deep into the hearts and minds of the students. Doctrine and Covenants 50:10–12 explains why this is so. It states, “Let us reason together that ye may understand; . . . even so will I, the Lord, reason with you that you may understand.” To bring about successful reasoning, both parties must be thinking and communicating until understanding comes. One of the most successful missionaries of all time used this method of teaching: “Paul, as his manner was, . . . reasoned with them out of the scriptures” (Acts 17:2). Jesus asked His Apostles, “But whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). His question caused His disciples to think, respond, and eventually come to understand. Peter’s response allowed the Spirit to take the knowledge of Christ deep into his own heart and mind. This question and answer also taught the other disciples and opened the way for Jesus to teach even more. The scriptures record, “And I will show unto you my strong reasoning” (D&C 45:10; emphasis added); also, “And for this cause, that men might be made partakers of the glories which were to be revealed, the Lord sent forth the fullness of his gospel, his everlasting covenant, reasoning in plain-
ness and simplicity” (D&C 133:57; emphasis added). Asking the right questions causes this strong reasoning to take place. It causes the gospel to be taught in plainness, in simplicity, and in power.

Elder Henry B. Eyring has 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. . . . And if we can be led by inspiration to choose the right small things to change, consistent obedience will bring great improvement.”

All gospel teachers use questions often in their classrooms to varying degrees. I am convinced that improving our questioning skills is one of the greatest things that we can do to teach as Jesus, the Master Teacher, taught. Most of the changes that have been explained and suggested in this article are small things, yet they can multiply the effectiveness of the gospel classroom a hundredfold. And, most importantly, questions invite the Holy Ghost into the lives of the students so that the principles of the gospel go deep into their hearts and minds. I have had numerous teachers report that asking better questions, even the right questions, has brought excitement and vitality into their teaching as never before. These teachers indicate that the students are having a great experience because they are more engaged in the learning process. And, finally, they report that they are teaching by the Spirit at a level that used to happen only occasionally, but now it happens almost every day.

Notes

Our most important outcome as teachers is to inspire class members with spiritual power that will drive the gospel into their hearts and lives.

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library

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Instruct, But More Importantly, Inspire

Steven T. Linford

Steven T. Linford is a CES assistant area director in Orem, Utah.

What is the greatest outcome you hope for in the classroom? Is it to dazzle the students with brilliance and insight? Is it to have a fun-filled class with an abundance of humor and laughter? Do you hope to stir deep emotion, even evoking tears? How do you know when you have taught a good lesson? What measure do you use to determine the effectiveness of your class? More importantly, what is the greatest outcome of effective teaching?

President Gordon B. Hinckley delivered a marvelous talk to religious educators. He said, “And I thought of what a great challenge this is for you to teach in such a way as to not only instruct but, more importantly, to inspire.”

In that same setting, just moments earlier, Elder Henry B. Eyring taught: “And yet the troubles and the temptations our students faced just five years ago pale in comparison with what we see now, and even more difficult times are ahead. I have felt as many of you have felt that what we have done and are doing will not be enough. We need greater power to get the gospel down into the hearts and lives of our students.”

According to our prophet and our former commissioner, the most important outcome in the classroom is to “inspire” with spiritual power that will drive “the gospel down into the hearts and lives of our students.” This outcome is vital because we are living in a time of great wickedness, with an evil mist that seems to be expanding and becoming increasingly dense, thick, and dark. Therefore, it is imperative that our students have frequent opportunities to be edified by the light and
truth of the gospel. As one of my friends stated, “As Satan continues to get in our face with increasing intensity, we must in turn face him with greater spiritual power.”

When students are taught with spiritual power, their souls are lifted, their faith is fortified, and their confidence waxes strong to meet life’s challenges. Moreover, when taught with power, students feel an increased desire and motivation “to forsake sin and to come unto Christ, call on His name, obey His commandments, and abide in His love.”3 In essence, our students become converted.

In emphasizing the principle that students want to be taught with spiritual power and clarity, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. says, “The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted.”4 Additionally, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explains, “Most people don’t come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven.”5

What, then, are things we can do to teach with greater inspiration and thereby lead students to deeper conversion?6 How can we be stronger instruments in fortifying faith and renewing hope? What more can be done to create a climate that invites the Spirit to inspire? The answers to these questions are found in the scriptures and in the words of modern-day prophets and apostles. These answers include the essential prerequisites of (a) purifying our hearts, (b) receiving the power of God within us, and (c) exercising the power of faith.

Purifying Our Hearts: Motives, Methods, and Outcomes

Ezra 7:10 states, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” Before Ezra taught, he prepared his heart by seeking the law or the will of the Lord and then doing it. Likewise, a key to teaching by the Spirit also begins with preparing our hearts through purifying our attitudes and intents and by seeking the Lord’s will and doing it. To teach by the “Spirit of truth,” we must ensure that our hearts, including our motives, are pure because if they are not, we will teach by “some other way” (D&C 50:17).7 The following table8 includes some of the motives of those who teach “by the Spirit of truth,” compared to those who teach by “some other way” (D&C 50:17).
I watched firsthand a teacher transform from someone who was a skilled instructor to a teacher who, in addition, inspired his students by changing his motive for teaching. His heart had changed from teaching to receive the “praise of evaluators” to teaching to reflect an “eye single to the glory of God.” One day I asked him what brought about this wonderful change. He said, “I simply started to focus on loving my students and helping them, rather than on myself.” He explained, “When people walk in [to observe and evaluate], it sincerely makes no difference; my motive has changed from myself [trying to impress and “aspire to the honors of men”] to serving the students.” This change in his mind and heart brought about great changes in the spiritual outcomes in his classroom. These outcomes included an increase in “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22) that enabled him to inspire students to share more freely and abundantly their feelings, experiences, and testimonies regarding the Savior, the gospel, the scriptures, and the principles being taught, as well as to express their commitment to act on what they had learned and felt.

Sometimes the needed change of heart isn’t limited only to purifying our motives. The needed change can include being cleansed and relieved from bitterness, anger, and apathy; exhibiting forgiveness; avoiding jealousy; and overcoming other sinful feelings. At times, we might need to experience a “mighty change of heart,” which is preceded by experiencing a mighty broken heart. Then, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, we can receive the Lord’s help and be cleansed and purified from whatever is ailing our heart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By the Spirit of truth</th>
<th>By some other way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The motive:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The motive:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to D&amp;C 4:5:</td>
<td>According to 2 Nephi 26:29-31:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Eye single to the glory of God”</td>
<td>• “Set themselves up for a light”</td>
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<tr>
<td>According to 1 Timothy 1:5:</td>
<td>• “That they may get gain”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “Charity out of a pure heart . . . and of faith unfeigned”</td>
<td>• “And praise of the world”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to Alma 29:9:</td>
<td>• “They seek not the welfare of Zion”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “That perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God”</td>
<td>And according to D&amp;C 121:35-36:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And according to Moroni 10:3-5:</td>
<td>• “Hearts are set so much upon the things of this world”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “A sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ”</td>
<td>• “Aspire to the honors of men”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “To cover our sins”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• “To gratify” our pride</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To gratify “our vain ambition”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• “To exercise control or dominion”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The next table illustrates some methods used to teach “by the Spirit of truth” compared to methods done by “some other way.” Note that the motives in the teacher’s heart largely determine the methods the teacher will use in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The method:</th>
<th>The method:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Focus on the scriptures and the words of the living prophets (D&amp;C 52:9)</td>
<td>2. The use of uninspiring sources or methods (1 Timothy 1:3–4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use boldness, but not overbearance (Alma 38:12)</td>
<td>3. Soft-pedaling, misdirected zeal or enthusiasm, self-righteousness (Jacob 4:18; Matthew 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Humor (D&amp;C 123:17, 59:15). Heber C. Kimball taught, “I am perfectly satisfied that my Father and my God is a cheerful, pleasant, lively, and good-natured Being. . . . He is a jovial, lively person, and a beautiful man.”</td>
<td>4. Light-mindedness (88:69, 121), sharing that which is frivolous and inappropriate. We should avoid “seeking after the vain and foolish things which amuse and entertain the world,” declared President Joseph Fielding Smith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rejoice and thanksgiving (D&amp;C 50:22; 136:28)</td>
<td>5. Entertainment (for its sake alone). In Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook, we read, “Sometimes teachers, in an attempt to entertain students or hold their interest, choose methods or use techniques that are not in harmony with the principles of edification.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Testifying (D&amp;C 18:36)</td>
<td>6. Boasting (D&amp;C 50:33; Alma 26:11–12; 38:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Feelings of the heart (TG: Heart). Elder Parley P. Pratt said, “The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use.”</td>
<td>7. Emotionalism. President Howard W. Hunter cautioned, “Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, but that outward manifestation ought not to be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likening all scriptures unto us (1 Nephi 19:23)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Speculation (Jacob 4:14)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Complexity. Elder Robert L. Simpson stated, “As we complicate our lives, we discourage the gifts of the Spirit.”18

12. The still, small voice. Edification and enlightenment (3 Nephi 11:3; D&C 8:2–3; 50:22; 85:6)


13. Teach the truth and righteousness (D&C 50:9–25). Truth is emphasized (especially vv. 14, 17, 19, 21)

13. Explicit descriptions of evil. Sometimes we inadvertently teach what we do not intend nor want to teach. Speak of evil, but rarely describe it in detail (see 2 Timothy 3)


14. Flattery and an appeal to vanity (see Index, “Flattery”)

15. That when all have spoken that all may be edified of all (D&C 88:122)

15. Fruitless discussions or “vain jangling” (1 Timothy 1:6c)

I observed a teacher use basketball as the base method of his lesson. He divided his class into two teams, boys against the girls. Next, the students read a certain number of verses and then closed their scriptures and answered questions about the verses. The first person from either side who knew the answer to the question got to shoot the basketball from a number of different places, earning points with each successive basket. What happened next can be described by the following words: war, heated competition, put-downs, accusations of cheating, sarcasm, shouting, and, ultimately, chaos. As the time passed, the contention escalated as the boys continued to gloat in their dominance.

After the class was finally over, a frustrated and somewhat exasperated teacher realized the method he had chosen was largely based on entertainment and had no spiritually strengthening effect on his students whatsoever. He vowed he would never use another method that would displace the scriptures as the basis of the lesson or that would drive the Spirit away.

Teaching by the Spirit of truth—outcomes. In Doctrine and Covenants 50:22, the Lord revealed the outcomes of teaching by the “Spirit of truth.” He said, “Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (emphasis added). Understanding, edification, and rejoicing are scriptural descriptions and the outcomes of being taught with power. More specifically, as students are taught with power, they more clearly understand the principles being taught, they are edified and
inspired to act on what they have learned, and they feel an increase of love and gratitude for the Lord, His gospel, the scriptures, and one another. As students experience these outcomes, they will be more converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Elder Eyring gave counsel to the “preacher” on how to have an edifying experience in the classroom: “Our aim must be for [our students] to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us. . . . What we seek for our students is that change. We must be humble about our part in it. True conversion depends on a student seeking freely in faith, with great effort and some pain. Then it is the Lord who can grant, in His time, the miracle of cleansing and change.”

Elder Eyring taught that not all of our students will experience conversion while they are with us, but he did say that “we can play a vital part” for all of them. Elder Eyring further added that our role as teachers is to allow the Holy Ghost to confirm truths when they are taught: “We are teachers whose charge is to place those words so that when the student chooses and pleads, the Holy Ghost can confirm them in the heart and the miracle can begin.”

Our students must understand that they play a role as the “hearer” and have a responsibility as the “receiver” of the word so edification can transpire. Once students have heard and received the word, they too can become “spokesmen” by sharing and testifying of what they know and feel is true so that “all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:122). As students are interested and engaged in the process of hearing, receiving, and testifying, the spiritual outcomes during the lesson are greatly enhanced.

While serving as president of BYU–Idaho, Elder David A. Bednar explained that students invite the Spirit into their minds and hearts through their actions. Speaking at his last devotional, Elder Bednar asked all the students present to hold their scriptures in the air. Elder Bednar then explained the reason he had encouraged all the students to bring their scriptures to each devotional—by so doing, each student was extending an invitation to the Spirit to be taught by revelation. Emphasizing another way students can play a role in inviting the Spirit into the classroom, Elder Scott taught, “When you encourage students to . . . respond to a question, they signify to the Holy Ghost their willingness to learn.” In addition, there are many other ways such as singing hymns, participating in discussions, staying focused, pondering the word, sharing testimony and experiences about the doctrine, and many more, that the students can do to invite the Spirit to teach them.
with power so that “he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22; emphasis added). As students understand and apply these principles, the spiritual outcomes are substantially increased during the lesson. Thus, if students want to be taught in the light, they must first be striving to stand in the light.

Teaching by some other way—outcomes. “Teaching by some other way” produces outcomes that are uninspiring, nonnourishing, unsubstantial, and nonsustaining. Elder Scott cautioned, “There is no place in your teaching for gimmicks, fads, or bribery by favors or treats. Such activities produce no lasting motivation for personal growth nor any enduring beneficial results. Simply stated, truths presented in an environment of true love and trust qualify for the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit.”

One afternoon in an inservice meeting, several teachers voiced their feelings regarding teaching by the “Spirit of truth” or teaching “by some other way.” One teacher commented that when he teaches “by some other way,” he feels like he is performing and also feels that his lessons are cheap, shallow, and superficial. Another teacher remarked that when teaching “by some other way,” he knew he was relying on his own strength (primarily his personality) rather than on the Lord’s strength and power. When teachers teach by the “Spirit of truth,” they can immediately feel it and recognize it and will have a desire to change their motives and methods so they have edifying outcomes.

In speaking of the power that comes into our teaching as we purify our hearts, Elder Carlos E. Asay taught, “A pure doctrine taught by a pure man or woman with pure motive will result in a pure testimony.” Along with having pure hearts, if we want to instruct and inspire, we must also receive the power of God within us.

Receiving the Power of God within Us

In the Book of Mormon, as well as in other scriptures, we find remarkable examples of teachers who were filled with spiritual power and subsequently taught with inspiration. Simply stated, if we also receive the power of God within us, then we can teach with inspiration.

Nephi and Lehi are prime examples of those who received the power within and then subsequently taught with great power: “And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did preach unto the Lamanites with such great power and authority, for they had power and authority given unto them that they might speak, and they also had what they should speak given unto them” (Helaman 5:18). Further, the record
reads, “And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from
heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with
fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words” (Helaman 5:45;
emphasis added). And as a result of being taught with power, many
were confounded, and then they confessed and were baptized “and
immediately returned to the Nephites to endeavor to repair unto them
the wrongs which they had done” (Helaman 5:17). Even others were
convinced (Helaman 5:50) and brought “into the depths of humility
to be the humble followers of God and the Lamb” (Helaman 6:5).

Other scriptural examples also show the results of those who
received the power of God within and then subsequently taught with
this amazing power. Alma, after bearing a powerful testimony about
Jesus Christ and the Atonement, said that “this is the testimony which
is in me” (Alma 7:13; emphasis added). Similarly, as was stated of
Ether, “Ether was a prophet of the Lord . . . and began to prophesy
unto the people, for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit
of the Lord which was in him” (Ether 12:2; emphasis added). Further,
Jeremiah vowed to close his mouth and to preach no longer about
Jehovah, but he could not because “his word was in mine heart as a
burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing,
and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9; emphasis added). These men
had the power of God in them, consuming their very bones; and, as a
result, they were able to teach with inspiration. Although all the cited
men were ancient prophets who held priesthood keys, the principles of
preparation that were used by them can be emulated by any teacher in
the Church today. Hence, to be able to teach with this kind of power
requires a type of preparation that runs deeper than just going through
the motions—it descends beneath superficiality, pretentiousness, and
hypocrisy, and the power of the Holy Ghost penetrates the shell of the
inspiring teacher and sinks to his or her very core.

In the chart below are examples of teachers who demonstrated the
method used to invite and receive this power as well as the outcomes
that occurred in the minds and hearts of the listeners.

From the scriptures, we see people receiving power of God
through remembering, exercising faith, living righteously, being hum-
ble, studying the scriptures, fasting, praying, attending the temple,26
and being strictly obedient. Thus, if we want to teach with power,
we must first receive the power. Receiving the power of God within
us does not come inexpensively; it requires us to pay the price in per-
sonal preparation. And at some point, after we have demonstrated our
intent and have qualified ourselves, the Lord, based on His criteria,
will bless us with His Spirit. As we study the scriptures with a sincere desire and real intent, we feel the power of the word of God by hearing and feeling the “voice” of the Lord (see D&C 18:34–36). Then, we know we have received the Lord’s message for His children, and

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scripture example</th>
<th>Method/Power source</th>
<th>Outcomes in people</th>
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<tr>
<td>King Benjamin (Omni 1:25; Words of Mormon 1:17; Mosiah 2; 5:2–4)</td>
<td>“Knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord” (Omni 1:25; emphasis added)</td>
<td>“Because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change . . . in our hearts, . . . we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“For behold, king Benjamin was a holy man, and he did reign over his people in righteousness; and there were many holy men in the land, and they did speak the word of God with power and with authority” (Words of Mormon 1:17; emphasis added).</td>
<td>“And we . . . have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Humility (Mosiah 2:10–11)</td>
<td>“And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy” (Mosiah 5:2–4; emphasis added).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma and the four sons of Mosiah (Alma 17:2–4; Alma 23:5; Alma 26:13)</td>
<td>“They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently. . . . They had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; . . . and when they taught, they taught with power and authority” (Alma 17:2–3; emphasis added).</td>
<td>“By the power of their words many were brought before the altar of God, to call on his name and confess their sins before him” (Alma 17:4).</td>
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<td>“They are brought to sing redeeming love . . . because of the power of his word which is in us”(Alma 26:13; emphasis added)</td>
<td>“And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord” (Alma 23:5; emphasis added).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Thousands [have been] loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love” (Alma 26:13; emphasis added).</td>
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</table>
we can enter our classroom filled with faith that they too can hear and feel His voice. This is when we know we are ready not only to instruct but also to inspire.

Elder Paul V. Johnson, administrator of Religious Education, states, “I really believe living the gospel is the single most important thing you can do to improve your teaching. It makes it possible to have the Spirit with you in your life as you prepare and teach your lessons and as you interact with your students. There is no substitute for the Spirit.”

Likewise, President Boyd K. Packer says, “Power comes when a teacher has done all that he can to prepare, not just the individual lesson, but in keeping his life in tune with the Spirit. If he will learn to rely on the Spirit for inspiration, he can go before his class . . . secure in the knowledge that he can teach with inspiration.”

Students recognize and appreciate teachers who have paid the price in preparation and have obtained the power within to teach with inspiration. Here are some students’ comments that were written about their teacher:

“She had wonderful teaching [techniques] and object lessons. Her lessons were packed with the Spirit, and I always left uplifted and happy.”

“[She] was always prepared. I felt the Spirit when she taught.”

“She has a great testimony and she knows the scriptures very well. She is helping me understand the scriptures.”

“Very nice, spiritual, encouraging, makes class fun.”

“Funny, taught us a lot. Fun to be around. Has a very strong testimony of our Heavenly Father.”

“I could tell she put a lot of effort into her lessons. She brought the Spirit when she taught. I like how she bore her testimony to us.”

Finally, the great Exemplar, Jesus Christ, stated: “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19; emphasis added). The Lord applied this same principle to us when He said: “And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken” (D&C 43:16).

The Power of Faith

Exercising faith is absolutely necessary in when we are accessing spiritual power. In Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook, we read the following about faith: “It is a principle of power in religious education as well, and teachers will not succeed without it.”

To teach with inspiration, we must have faith in the Lord Jesus
Christ. Mormon taught, “And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33). This promise extends to those who face the challenge of teaching the youth, young adults, and adults the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Spirit.

The role that faith plays in teaching cannot be overstated; it has a profound influence on preparation, presentation, our expectations, and our connections with students. Fear is the antithesis of faith; it is an emotion manipulated by the adversary to dilute or eliminate the power of God in our lives. When fear displaces or even minimizes faith, the spiritual outcomes in the classroom are diminished or, even worse, eliminated. The adversary uses other forms of fear that include despondency, discouragement, despair, and depression that can also displace faith. If permitted, fear can affect our decisions during preparation, confine us during presentation, minimize our expectations, and strangulate our relationships with our students. These negative effects create an impetus leading toward uninspiring teaching. The Lord counsels us, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36). Thoughts of fear, like any other restrictive thoughts, can be driven from the mind and replaced with powerful, facilitating thoughts of faith. In addition to having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and overcoming fear, when we exercise faith in the word of God, offer prayers of faith, and have faith in our students, we teach with greater spiritual power than when we do not practice these behaviors.

*Exercising faith in the word of God.* Exercising faith during preparation empowers us to feast on the words of Christ, certain the Lord will show us through the Spirit what to teach and how to teach it (2 Nephi 32:3, 5). Thus, the promise that “when a [teacher] speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1). Preparing with faith also ensures we will not shrink during our preparation time into doing easier things like skimming the Word, deciding to wing the “how,” resorting to a “canned” lesson that may or may not have the power to sustain students of our day, or merely looking for something to “kill some time.” Even preparing the fringe, the sensational, or the spectacular just to “hold them” can be the product of fear. Indeed, the temptation might be to “fry some froth,” quickly preparing lessons with little or no spiritual nutritional value whatsoever. We must guard against substituting the word of God, which is more powerful than anything else, for that which is nonnourishing or unsubstantial. Another example of this behavior is to overemphasize the use of methods that could
distract from, or even eclipse, the word of God, all because of the teacher’s fear that the scriptures won’t hold the students or that they won’t like a scripture-based lesson. In Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook, we read, “Satan would have teachers believe that students will not like studying the scriptures, or that one cannot teach the scriptures day after day and be successful. But the power of the Lord’s word is sure. 32

On the other hand, fear can also lead to overpreparation—to prepare so much and so long that it becomes counter-productive. Similarly, a time will come when the fear must be replaced with faith when we recognize that after we have paid the price, the Lord will compensate for our deficiencies. In speaking on preparation, Elder Holland testifies, “Then, if our hearts are right, if we are as clean as we can be, if we have prayed and wept and prepared and worried until we don’t know what more we can do, God can say to us as He did to Alma and the sons of Mosiah: ‘Lift up thy head and rejoice. . . . I will give unto you success’” (Alma 8:15; 26:27). 33

Offering prayers of faith. Part of preparing with faith includes offering the prayer of faith. Regarding this aspect of faith, Elder Eyring teaches:

You must have the Spirit as your constant companion to teach with power, and your students will not survive spiritually without the Spirit as their companion. We and they will qualify for the power we require in the same way. It takes prayer offered in faith and it takes obedience to the commandments of God. For some of us it may take more prayer, but for all of us it will take more faith. We need to have unshaken confidence that the Spirit will come to attend us. So do our students. We need to pray with confidence that the Spirit will guide us in our teaching and in our lives. Part of that faith is our determination, as we plead for the Spirit, that we will obey its directions.

Once the Lord knows our faith is sufficient that He can be certain we will obey, He will send the Spirit to teach us more clearly and more frequently. The prayer of faith always includes a commitment to obey. Our obedience, in time, will bring, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the change in our natures that we need to find peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. He wants that for us and for our students. 34

I know of a teacher who has a sign posted next to his office door that reads, “Never Again,” which to him means he will never teach a lesson again without first offering a prayer of faith. Another teacher observed that her lessons are only as powerful as the prayers she offers before teaching her classes.

A prayer of faith is best offered at the beginning of preparation and
again at the beginning of presentation. It can include asking for the gift of discernment to understand the needs of the students and to see the relevancy, the applicability, or the “Therefore, what?” of the lesson for them. A prayer of faith could also include a request to receive the gift of charity—to feel the love of our Savior for all students, no matter how difficult it might be to like or love them and to request that they, too, might also feel and recognize this love. Additionally, a teacher could ask that the students will not only understand the principles but also will feel the importance of them in their hearts in a way that strengthens them against the adversary. A prayer of faith might even include a righteous request for grace, the enabling power of the Atonement, to strengthen us beyond our own ability. We could make numerous other humble requests as we offer the prayer of faith, remembering the Lord’s promise, “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you” (Moroni 7:26).

**Having faith in students.** Having faith in our students will lead to higher expectations and stronger connections with them than if we don’t have faith in them. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. delivered inspired and poignant remarks about students. He says:

> The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. . . .

> These students crave the faith their fathers and mothers have; they want it in its simplicity and purity. . . .

> You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in his ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with him. You do not need to disguise religious truths with a cloak of worldly things; you can bring these truths to him openly.  

If teachers truly believe these statements and if they really have faith in their students, the way they teach will be profoundly affected. For example, one of the most powerful ways to invite the Spirit into the classroom is to encourage students to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the doctrines and principles being taught. However, such experiences occur only as the teacher believes and has faith that students are willing, eager, and capable to explain and testify of the truths of the restored gospel. And when students are given these opportunities, if they feel safe, they will share personal, real, meaningful thoughts and feelings.
Conclusion

Thus, if the greatest outcome of teaching a class is inspiration, then the measure of a good lesson isn’t necessarily in the number of elicited laughs, the number of tears shed, or the amount of information we have imparted. Neither is it found in the amount of praise we receive afterwards. They might be part of the outcome, but the greatest measure on whether a lesson has been helpful is the presence of the Holy Ghost. If we have felt the power of the Holy Ghost, then we can know the will of the Lord has been accomplished. And even if a single person doesn’t come up afterward to offer praise, we can still know that we have been instruments in the hands of God. Further, we can know that if our students have also prepared, they too have been inspired to more fully understand and live the principles and doctrines of the gospel. Hence, the great challenge to “not only instruct, but more importantly, to inspire,” identified by President Hinckley, ought to be the desire and motive of every teacher in the Church. Through inspirational teaching, students are awakened to and affirmed in their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Simply stated, teaching with inspiration is more important than engaging entertainment, more important than intellectual stimulation, and more important than emotional manifestation. It is the Spirit that opens the mind to understand truth and that touches the heart to feel the desire to act on truth—thus leading to deep conversion. Inspiring teaching is possible only through purifying our hearts, filling our souls with God’s power, and exercising faith—all of which invite the Spirit. 

Notes

6. This is the very purpose for which the teaching emphasis was designed. It was developed to help bring about personal conversion. It would be erroneous to think the emphasis could be reduced to group work, pair and share, or a checklist. It is not. It is to identify principles that, when appropriately applied in
the classroom, will invite and lead to conversion, as well as to the assessment of conversion. “By implementing the following emphases and adjustments, CES will more directly prepare young people for effective missionary service, to receive the ordinances of the temple, and to emulate and teach gospel principles throughout their lives. This will also help deepen their faith, testimony, and conversion” (A Current Teaching Emphasis for the Church Educational System [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 1).

7. Joseph Smith taught, “It is in vain to try to hide a bad spirit from the eyes of them who are spiritual, for it will show itself in speaking and in writing, as well as in all our other conduct. It is also needless to make great pretensions when the heart is not right; the Lord will expose it to the view of His faithful Saints” (History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957], 1:317).

8. Special appreciation to Tom Tyler for initially compiling most of the information contained in the tables and to Joel Judd for bringing it to my attention. Used with permission.

9. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught, “Perhaps none of us serves in every capacity all the time for only a single reason. Since we are imperfect beings, most of us probably serve for a combination of reasons. These combinations may be different from time to time as we grow spiritually. But we should all strive to serve for the reasons that are highest and best.” Elder Oaks then lists six reasons for service, presented in ascending order from the lesser to the greater. The motives are (1) earthly reward, (2) good companionship, (3) fear of punishment, (4) duty or loyalty, (5) hope of reward, and (6) charity (see Pure in Heart [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 39–49).

15. After observing a well-educated university professor who was using his knowledge to impress a Sunday School class, Elder Richard G. Scott recorded in his journal, “Teach and testify to instruct, edify, and lead others to full obedience, not to demonstrate anything of self. All who are puffed up shall be cut off” (Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led, address to religious educators at a symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history, BYU, August 11, 1998, 11.
16. One way to “liken the scriptures” is to ask application questions. In speaking on this, Elder Henry B. Eyring taught: “But some questions invite inspiration. Great teachers ask those. That may take a small change of words, an inflection in the voice. Here is a question that might not invite inspiration: ‘How is a true prophet recognized?’ “But we could ask the question this way, with just a small difference: ‘When have you felt that you were in the presence of a prophet?’ That will invite individuals to search their memories for feelings. After asking, we might wisely wait for a moment before calling on someone to respond. Even those who do not speak will be thinking of spiritual experiences. That will invite the Holy Ghost” (The Lord

17. Henry B. Eyring, We Must Raise Our Sights, address to religious educators at a conference on the Book of Mormon, August 14, 2001, 6.


19. Eyring, We Must Raise Our Sights, 2, 4.

20. Eyring, We Must Raise Our Sights, 4.

21. Eyring, We Must Raise Our Sights, 4.

22. “New Apostle Addresses BYU—Idaho Students,” Church News, November 20, 2004, 3. “By way of tradition, BYU—Idaho students hold their scriptures in the air at weekly devotional assemblies to show they are ready to be taught the word of God. Elder Bednar explained the reason behind the outward symbol of inward preparation that he began seven years ago upon his arrival as the fourteenth president of the university.

   “Elder Bednar stated, ‘I choked with emotion as I watched you hold up your scriptures today. You may wonder, ‘Why does Elder Bednar always have us raise our scriptures?’ The answer is simple. Our study and use of the scriptures is an invitation to receive revelation and be tutored by the Holy Ghost.’”


24. Scott, Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led, 3; emphasis added.

25. Carlos E. Asay, In the Lord’s Service (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 22.

26. See D&C 109:13, 22, 38 for the promises of power to those who enter the temple.

27. Paul V. Johnson, CES address to new hires, May 15, 2002; emphasis added.


31. The word of God has a more powerful effect upon the mind “than the sword, or anything else” (Alma 31:5). The word of God “healeth the wounded soul” (Jacob 2:8) and “will tell you all things what ye should do” and show how to do them (2 Nephi 32:3). The scriptures contain the power to shield us from the fiery darts of the adversary (see 1 Nephi 15:24) and to help us become “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). According to President Boyd K. Packer, the scriptures provide immunization against the “perilous times” of the last days (see Teach the Scriptures [address to religious educators, October 14, 1977], 5).


34. Eyring, The Spirit Must Be Our Constant Companion, 1.

What is it that motivates individuals to change for the better or inspires them to strive to become more Christlike? What is it that first plants the desire in people’s hearts to want to know the truth for themselves? The Prophet Joseph Smith answers, “Human testimony and human testimony only . . . excite[s] this inquiry, in the first instance, in their minds.”1 Thus, the greatest purpose of teaching (or of sharing “human testimony”) is that of catalyst—that of change agent—to inspire, motivate, and guide others to a higher and better way of living. As one educator observes: “For learning to occur, there has to be some kind of change in the learner. No change, no learning. And significant learning requires that there be some kind of lasting change that is important in terms of the learner’s life.”2

The Apostle Paul teaches that “faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God” (Romans 10:17). That being true, then the importance of great teachers who bear witness of the word of God can hardly be overemphasized. Teaching is the greatest tool for imparting truth and strengthening faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The pivotal role a teacher plays in imparting the word and bearing heartfelt testimony is a vital part of our Heavenly Father’s plan, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie notes:

I shall turn to that wondrous verse in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians in which Paul speaks of the kind of teachers who are involved in proclaiming the message of salvation to the world. He is identifying the true church. He is giving some of the essential identifying characteristics
of the kingdom that has the power to save men. He says: “And God
hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly
teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments,
diversities of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28). . . .

I think this order of priority is perfect: Apostles, prophets, teachers.
And that places you, because you are the kind of teachers that Paul is
talking about, that makes you the third great group whose very exist-
tence establishes the truth and divinity of the work. This means that if
you learn how to present the message of salvation, and in fact do it in
the way that the Lord intends that it be presented, then you stand to
all the world as an evidence that this is God’s kingdom.

The scriptures provide several excellent examples of inspiring
teachers. Alma the Elder converted at least 204 souls unto Christ at
one time. “They were baptized in the waters of Mormon, and were
filled with the grace of God” (Mosiah 18:16). The spiritual witness
these converts received at the waters of Mormon made that place
“beautiful . . . to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge
of their Redeemer; . . . and how blessed are they, for they shall sing to
his praise forever” (Mosiah 18:30). Imagine what it would be like to
have our students look back on personal conversion moments in our
classrooms and have similar feelings.

Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah were also among
the most inspiring teachers in the Book of Mormon. They “waxed
strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound
understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that
they might know the word of God. But this is not all; they had given
themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit
of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they
taught with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:2–3; emphasis
added). As a result, the Lord honored their preparation and prom-
ised them, “I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the
salvation of many souls” (Alma 17:11), and they were! (see Alma
19:31; 22:23). The result of their teaching was permanent conver-
sion: “And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed,
or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through
the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of
revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles
in them—yea, I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the
Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the
Lord, never did fall away. For they became a righteous people” (Alma
23:6–7; emphasis added).
Helaman and his two sons, Lehi and Nephi, brought into “the church of God, many souls, yea, even tens of thousands” (Helaman 3:26). Enoch, over the process of time, brought his people into such a state of righteousness that they were translated and taken into heaven (see Moses 7:18–19, 21).

When we speak of inspiring teachers in our own day, names like Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball, and Joseph Smith come to mind. Parley P. Pratt, himself an effective teacher, recounted an incident when he watched the Prophet Joseph Smith teach with power and with the Spirit:

While visiting with brother Joseph in Philadelphia, a very large church was opened for him to preach in, and about three thousand people assembled to hear him. Brother [Sidney] Rigdon spoke first, and dwelt on the Gospel, illustrating his doctrine by the Bible. When he was through, brother Joseph arose like a lion about to roar; and being full of the Holy Ghost, spoke in great power, bearing testimony of the visions he had seen, the ministering of angels which he had enjoyed; and how he had found the plates of the Book of Mormon, and translated them by the gift and power of God. He commenced by saying: “If nobody else had the courage to testify of so glorious a message from Heaven, and of the finding of so glorious a record, he felt to do it in justice to the people, and leave the event with God.”

The entire congregation were astounded; electrified, as it were, and overwhelmed with the sense of the truth and power by which he spoke, and the wonders which he related. A lasting impression was made; many souls were gathered into the fold. And I bear witness, that he, by his faithful and powerful testimony, cleared his garments of their blood.4

The promise is made in the scriptures that there will yet be other teachers with this same converting power: “Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; . . . yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance” (Alma 26:22; emphasis added). These “thousands of souls” do not need to be converted all at once. They can be touched one by one, a few every semester, over the course of a teacher’s career. “We are strongly encouraged by various scriptures,” Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminds us, “to touch those within our present circle of influence rather than obsessively wishing for a larger circle.”5

The worth of all souls is great in the sight of God, and He has made choice promises to those who bring even one soul unto Him (see D&C 18:10, 15). As we teach our own students today, we can learn
how to touch hearts and convert souls, just as great teachers living in earlier times have done.

**Abiding by the Precepts**

Inspiring teachers encourage students to live the principles the students study. The personal application of gospel principles found in the scriptures makes a great deal of difference. For example, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that those who determine to “abide” (or personally apply and live by) the precepts (principles) they read in the Book of Mormon, will come to know God (see Introduction to the Book of Mormon, paragraph 6).

The door leading to eternal life hangs on that knowledge (see John 17:3). The Savior has promised that those who “receive [the Book of Mormon] in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life” (D&C 20:14; emphasis added). Alma recognized the power that teaching the truth can have on the hearts of people when he gave up his political career as chief judge so he could spend all his time preaching the word (see Alma 4:18–20; 31:5).

Spiritual strength comes into the lives of those who keep the commandments and apply the principles of the gospel. Thus, one of the great challenges of teaching the gospel is to plant a desire in the hearts of students to do more than listen and learn—they need to be motivated to abide by and apply the principles. While teaching the New Testament one year, CES instructor Rich Reading hung a large, brightly colored banner across the front of his classroom that read, “What Would the Savior Do?” At the end of each class, he would ask questions such as “What would the Savior do today as a result of what we have talked about?” and “How will you be different today because of what we have discussed?” Gospel teachers reflect the power of their profession by focusing hearts and minds on the converting principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Teach to Reach**

As President Ezra Taft Benson reminds us, “We should constantly ask ourselves, Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?” This attitude is especially important for those teaching the scriptures. We must find ways of helping our students own the blessings of the gospel for themselves.

Perhaps this is, in part, what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he reminded us that we have no right to claim the promises made
to previous generations—we must lay hold on eternal lives for ourselves in our own day and time. “Search the scriptures—search the revelations which we publish, and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to his glory nothing doubting, he will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation. . . . Then again we say: Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you.”

Note the variety of ways the Lord encourages us to “search” His words to discover “what portion of them belongs to” us:

- “Thou shalt meditate therein” (Joshua 1:8; emphasis added).
- “Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3; emphasis added).
- “Search them diligently” (Mosiah 1:7; emphasis added).
- “Lay hold upon the word of God” (Helaman 3:29; emphasis added).
- “Ponder upon the things which I have said” (3 Nephi 17:3; emphasis added).
- “Study my word” (D&C 11:22; emphasis added).
- “Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life” (D&C 84:85; emphasis added).

As teachers, we can help our students learn to love the scriptures and, most importantly, learn how to apply the principles of the gospel in their own lives that they might be blessed.

For example, a teacher could say, “I am going to teach Malachi 3–4.” But why? For what purpose? To what end? What does this teacher want to have happen as a result of students studying these chapters? Various answers could be given. Notice how each decision about how to teach this lesson (listed below) is a determining factor in the experience students will have. A teacher could say:

1. I don’t have control over what students do in their lives. I’m just responsible to teach the scriptures.
2. I am going to teach the principles found in Malachi 3–4 and testify of their truthfulness. I will teach my students correct principles and allow them the agency to govern themselves, as Joseph
Smith prescribed.  

3. I am going to teach my students the scriptures, testify of the truthfulness of the principles in Malachi 3–4, and do my best motivate my students to pay their tithing honestly (see Malachi 3:8–12), to avoid losing hope (see Malachi 3:13–18), and to submit a family name to the temple to help fulfill Elijah’s mission (see Malachi 4:5–6).

Obviously, decisions made prior to teaching a lesson may determine its spiritual impact. Even teaching the scriptures can be done without power—if the goal is not predetermined. We can teach for comprehension, or we can teach for comprehension, application, and conversion.

The same is true of teaching all other scriptures and gospel principles. The more we encourage students to allow the word to work itself into the fiber of their souls (or become a part of their character), the greater the rewards. When the Savior taught the Nephites and Lamanites at the temple in the land Bountiful, He said: “Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (3 Nephi 12:20; emphasis added). The implication is that those who keep the commandments they learn about will enter into heaven.

Four Key Questions to Answer

Inspiring teachers have four key decisions to make before teaching. These four decisions determine the spiritual strength of the lesson. If the essence of effective teaching is to bring about change in the hearts and minds of others and if the purpose of teaching gospel principles is to increase faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then teachers should ask themselves these four questions as they prepare to teach: Why am I going to teach? What am I going to teach? How am I going to teach? And how will I testify of the things I have taught and teach my students to testify of the truths they have learned?

Why am I going to teach? This is the first important question every teacher should answer. Inspiring teachers make a determination to touch the hearts of those they are charged to teach—and they make that decision before they enter a classroom. Years ago I was walking between the Church Administration Building and the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake City. Unexpectedly, one of the doors in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building popped open, and Elder Marion D. Hanks exited. We were alone on the sidewalk, walking stride for stride. He smiled, and I introduced myself. He asked what I did, and I replied, “I teach seminary.” His voice boomed with enthu-
siasm, and he asked, “Why?”

That is a great question for every teacher to consider. Why? Why are we teaching? What do we want to accomplish in the classroom when we teach? Students come to us with predisposed expectations and approaches to learning. By answering the “why” question for our students, we can help them better see where we are headed and where we want them to go. Defining our expectations and learning outcomes (or what it is we want to occur as a result of our teaching) brings greater parity to our lesson, meaning that our ultimate goals are aligned with our lesson methodology, thus strengthening our presentation.

Whether conscious of it or not, inspiring teachers seem to answer the question, “Why am I going to teach this group of people?” Sometimes they even announce the “why” as they begin their teaching session.

King Benjamin, for example, called his people to gather at the temple in the land of Nephi and then announced why he wanted to talk with them: “My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view” (Mosiah 2:9).

Knowing why you want to teach makes a huge difference in the what and how you will teach. During 1843 in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Prophet Joseph Smith had been forced into hiding because of unlawful mobs who were attempting to kidnap him. He could not appear in public to teach the Saints, so he wrote letters containing his counsel and inspired instructions. In the opening paragraph of one of these letters (now canonized as scripture), the Prophet testified that he was moved to teach them about the principle of baptism for the dead. Why did he choose to teach this gospel principle at that time? He said he chose to do so because he was impressed by the Spirit to do so. “That subject [baptism for the dead],” he wrote, “seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest, since I have been pursued by my enemies” (D&C 128:1). Sometimes we teach a certain topic simply because the Spirit prompts us to do so.

The greatest “why” of teaching was given by the Savior. On the day the Church was organized, He declared that we are to “invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59). On the last page of the Book of Mormon, Moroni sealed his testimony with the following plea, which beautifully sums up the main reason why we teach:
Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; . . .

And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:32–33)

At the end of the semester, our students should not only have a deeper understanding of the scriptures and gospel principles we taught but also have a greater love for the Savior than when they began the semester. As the prophet Abinadi notes, if we teach the scriptures but do not strengthen testimonies about Jesus Christ, then we really do not understand them (see Mosiah 12:25–27), for all prophets have written the scriptures to bear witness of Christ (see Jacob 6:8; 7:11). Elder Dallin H. Oaks has noted a tendency to diminish the divinity and mission of our Savior in our teaching. He says: “I suggest that many Latter-day Saints are not yet aware of our unique position and our special responsibilities to testify of Christ. I suggest that we are not yet doing all we should.”

What am I going to teach? The “what” to teach is the heart of the lesson. Inspiring teachers decide what matters most, what would be most helpful for their students to learn. They select the ideas, principles, doctrines, scripture insights, and historical events or context that are most meaningful for their students. Many things could be taught, but we must focus on the things that matter most. “Students will always learn something, but good teaches want their students to learn something important or significant, rather than something relatively insignificant.”10 Elder Henry B. Eyring counsels: “As you prepare a lesson, look in it for converting principles. Most of your students want to do the right things, but they need the conversion that comes from doing the right thing in faith. A converting principle is one that leads to obedience to the will of God, always in faith and sometimes to the point of sacrifice.”11

Most teachers devote an extraordinary amount of time to study what they are to teach—and an infinite variety of levels of knowledge are possible on any given topic. As we prepare, we might ask ourselves, “Am I teaching the most important information related to this principle? Can I help my students draw nearer to the Savior by what I present? Will they be more appreciative of His atoning sacrifice and the great and eternal
plan of happiness as a result of what we study?” As President Harold B. Lee reminds us, we are not just to teach the doctrines so plainly that our students understand them “but [we] must teach the doctrines of the Church so plainly that no one can misunderstand.”

So how do we choose which principles to teach or how much emphasis to give each principle? The prophet Jacob said he had been consecrated as a teacher. He then tells us how he learned what to teach: “Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord” (Jacob 1:17; emphasis added).

Jacob prayed for the Spirit to know what to teach so he could reach his people. “Wherefore, I must tell you the truth,” Jacob said, “for behold, as I inquired of the Lord, thus came the word unto me, saying: Jacob, get thou up into the temple on the morrow, and declare the word which I shall give thee unto this people” (Jacob 2:11).

Today’s teachers have been given a similar promise: “Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man” (D&C 84:85). Prayers on behalf of our students and pleadings for guidance about what we are to teach them will be answered. As a paraphrase, James says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous teacher availeth much” (see James 5:16). Elder Russell M. Nelson shares an experience when he learned the importance of prayer and study to know what he was to teach:

Some of you many wonder—and I’m often asked even by my family—how the Brethren choose that subjects on which they will speak at general conference. The answer is “We get on our knees and we pray and we work and we try this thought and that thought and work and slave—tear papers up—start over again until we have that sweet witness of the Spirit that we are receiving the inspiration that the Lord would give.”

Let me recite just a little illustration to assist you in understanding this important issue. I think it was about two months ago Sister Nelson and I were invited at the last minute to go to a solemn assembly. One of the other members of the Quorum of the Twelve had received this assignment many months before. At the last moment, he was given an assignment that took him elsewhere, and so Thursday in the temple, the Brethren said, “Brother Nelson, we’d like you to take the assignment that Brother so and so was supposed to have. . . . I was eager to have that privilege. I went over to the brother whose place I was taking and I said, “Can you tell me what it’s like to speak at a solemn assembly? What had you planned to say?” He said, “I’ll give you my outline if you would like.” His outline was to tell the story about Brother Brown and
tell the story about Sister Jones, and tell the story about this experience and that experience. He said, “If that’s of any value to you, you can have it.” I said, “Thank you very much.” I realized that I couldn’t get much help from [his outline].

Friday evening before the solemn assembly, to be attended by all the priesthood leaders of fourteen stakes the following morning, I was on an airplane with Sister Nelson and with President Hinckley. I leaned over to him seated right in front of me, and I said, “President, I’d be pleased to receive whatever instruction you would like to give me—I’d be most grateful for it. Please!” He said, “Talk as long as you want on any subject you want.” I knew it was a two-hour meeting, and I tested him a little, and I said, “Would you like to me to talk two hours?” He said, “Yes, if you are up to it.” Then, he looked at me in all soberness and seriousness and he said, “You are the servant of the Lord. You give the message the Lord wants you to give.” That was my direction. That’s the direction the Brethren get from the First Presidency.

We got to St. George to the motel about ten o’clock at night. I kissed my sweetheart goodnight, tucked her in, and then prayed. I don’t think I went to bed that night. I sat up in that room pouring over the scriptures, studying, searching and writing. It came, and the following morning President Hinckley called on me to be the first speaker. I gave the message that came between midnight and 5:00 a.m. We are the Lord’s servants.

How am I going to teach this lesson? The how of a lesson is the pedagogy, methodology, approaches, and learning activities used to engage students in learning. Because students have a wide variety of spiritual needs, learning activities need to be suited to their particular and immediate interests. This is one reason we should never teach from old notes. Inspiring teachers look for things that are relevant to the group they are addressing. Each lesson, no matter how many times it has been taught before, can be approached with fresh enthusiasm.

To be most effective, we should ensure that the how of a lesson involves some element of discovery on the students’ part. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland says:

Now as you develop these [scripture study] skills, . . . please encourage your students to develop them as well. Invite them to read more slowly and more carefully and with more questions in mind. Help them to ponder, to examine every word, every scriptural gem. Teach them to hold it up to the light and turn it, look and see what’s reflected and refracted there. For some student, on a given day with a given need, such an examination may unearth a treasure hidden in a field, a pearl of great price, a pearl beyond price. Walt Whitman once
described reading as a gymnastic struggle, one in which, if we do it right, our mental and spiritual muscles are stretched and strengthened forever. Now, we need to be able to coach our students in those kinds of scriptural calisthenics.  

Elder Boyd K. Packer further describes why our students need to be given the opportunity to become engaged learners: “Spiritual self-reliance is the sustaining power in the Church. If we rob you of that, how can you get the revelation that there is a prophet of God? How can you get answers to prayer? How can you know? If we move so quickly to answer all your questions and provide so many ways to solve all of your problems, we may end up weakening you, not strengthening you.”

President David O. McKay also encourages this kind of teaching: “There are three things which must guide all teachers: first, get into the subject; second, get that subject into you; third, try to lead your pupils to get that subject into them—not pouring it into them, but leading them to see what you see, to know what you know, to feel what you feel.”

But how can we help students “capture” and “own” ideas? Dr. Walter Gong suggests that the word capture implies grasping or taking hold of something. It suggests an active mind rather than a passive one—a conscious organizing of what we read or hear so we can make sense out of it and then create a framework or structure for remembering and using it. According to Dr. Gong, students demonstrate they have “captured” something best when they can share it with others.

To help students become engaged in more significant learning, try “pair-sharing” and allow them to share their insights with others. Encourage deep engagement by taking a few minutes in class to allow each student to do some interactive sharing regarding such questions as:

- What is the greatest insight you gleaned from your reading during the past week or since the last time class met?
- What is the most important thing you learned in class today?
- What is one question you would like to have answered from today’s presentation?
- What is the most significant insight you came to understand as a result of being in class thus far this semester?

To begin a pair-share, have students pair up and introduce themselves to each other, and then have one student share the answer to the question you have posed while the other listens. After one minute, have students
switch roles, and instruct the other student to be the listener. Invite several students to share with the entire class what they were taught.

Pair-sharing is a quick, summative way for students to interact with each other and process what they are learning. The technique takes only a few minutes but yields high “capture” dividends.

In *A Current Teaching Emphasis for the Church Educational System*, Elder Paul V. Johnson indicates that teachers “are to help students learn to explain, share, and testify of the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel. We are to give them opportunities to do so with each other in class. We are to encourage them to do so outside of class with family and others.”

Pair-sharing parallels a pedagogical methodology instituted by the Savior among the participants in the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio. He instructed that when they met together, they were to allow each to share insights with the others: “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesman at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every [person] may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122).

As we share with one another ideas and testimonies, we need to learn how to do so in a way that is not offensive to the Spirit. For example, the sharing of highly personal spiritual experiences may not be appropriate or wise. This type of teaching tends to focus the spotlight on the teacher rather than on the gospel or the Savior. A better approach is to find an experience in the scriptures that parallels our own and then teach it and bear testimony that it is true. This approach, more appropriately, puts the focus on the scriptures and on the principles and prophets found in them. Inspiring teachers learn how to step out of the light so the light can rest on the Savior and His gospel more frequently.

**How will I testify of the things I have taught and teach my students to testify of the truths they have learned?** To teach by the Spirit is to testify of the truth. The Holy Ghost is a testator, and when the Spirit accompanies our teaching, testimonies will be strengthened. The Prophet Joseph Smith declares: “If I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy, . . . and any man who says he is a teacher or preacher of righteousness, and denies the spirit of prophesy, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

President Spencer W. Kimball describes how we can best testify of the truths we teach:
Do not exhort each other; that is not a testimony. Do not tell others how to live. Just tell how you feel inside. That is the testimony. The moment you begin preaching to others, your testimony is ended. Just tell us how you feel, what your mind and heart and every fiber of your body tells you.

Now, you are going to give your testimonies this afternoon. I hope that you’ll just open your hearts and let us look inside, . . . will you? Just open them up wide and turn on the lights and let us see your hearts, . . . how you feel. A testimony is not an exhortation; a testimony is not a sermon; none of you are here to exhort the rest. You are here to bear your own witness. It is amazing what you can say in thirty seconds by way of testimony, or in sixty seconds, or one hundred and twenty, or two hundred and forty, or whatever time you are given, if you confine yourselves to testimony. We’d like to know how you feel.

Conclusion

Spiritual power is inherent in the word of God; moreover, converting power is inherent in the words of teachers (see D&C 100:5–8). “To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful” (D&C 46:13–14; emphasis added; see also 3 Nephi 19:28).

Teaching others is a sacred, spiritual trust. Inspiring teachers are those who teach to reach and who fill their students’ hearts with the desire to come unto Christ and be saved. The Lord will not leave us alone in this important work. The Lord was a teacher, and He promises, “Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you” (D&C 88:78). His grace is an enabling power that will give us the ability to do more than we could ever do on our own. The Lord will send the Holy Ghost to bear witness that what we teach is true. The Spirit will carry our lessons into the hearts of our students and enable us to teach with converting power and to touch hearts in ways that promote lasting change and deepened commitment to the eternal truths of the gospel.

Notes

2. L. Dee Fink, “What Is ‘Significant Learning?’” handout in author’s possession, 3; emphasis in original. Dr. Fink is the author of Creating Significant


9. Dallin H. Oaks, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, CES Fireside for College-Age Young Adults, Brigham Young University, June 6, 1993, 5.


17. Adapted from Walter Gong, San Jose State University.


A friend of mine once received a note from her son’s schoolteacher asking if she would help him learn to tie his shoes. A little embarrassed at the thought of her child, who was actually quite intelligent, holding out an untied shoe to his teacher, she suddenly realized it was her fault. She had never given him the chance. She just did it for him. Every time! It had never occurred to her to help him do it himself. Now she realized that he had grown up content to let others tie his shoes.

Religious educators are sometimes like my friend. Perhaps our greatest shortcoming isn’t that we do things poorly. Instead, maybe the problem is that we do some things too well—so well that we never let our students do them. Perhaps we have become like the father who takes over the building of his son’s pinewood derby car because his inexperienced boy would “mess things up.” Our students may have a good experience in our classes. They might walk away uplifted, even amazed at the insights we shared, but if we always do for them what they should do for themselves, they will be unprepared for a world that needs them to do far more than tie their own shoes.

The Lord has declared that edification requires more than an inspired teacher. Students must receive “the word of truth . . . by the Spirit of truth” or else “it is not of God” (D&C 50:19–20; emphasis added). This process requires that students do more than just listen, even to a Spirit-filled instructor! Students must be given opportunities to receive by the Spirit of truth and should be taught how to do so. The following three principles will help teachers in this task.
Principle 1: Truth Is More Readily Learned When It Is Sought

Revelation flows most readily when it is sought. Many revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants illustrate that principle; often, they came when the Prophet Joseph Smith had a question. The role of the teacher is not necessarily to answer those questions but rather to foster the divine curiosity that causes students to wonder, to seek, and to ask. The teacher’s role is to “[stir] up the faith of multitudes to feel after [God].” It is then that revelation flows and lives change. It is then that the real teacher, the Holy Ghost, takes over and pours light into a hungry soul.

Consider how the Master taught the brother of Jared in Ether 3. The brother of Jared climbed Mount Shelem to have the Lord touch the sixteen stones, and the brother of Jared then walked down, having seen the spirit body of the Savior and conversed with Him about unspeakable things. What happened?

After the Lord answered the brother of Jared’s request and touched the stones, the brother of Jared “fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear.”

The Lord asked, “Why hast thou fallen?”

“I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood,” was his explanation.

Then, after clarifying that His body was not yet of “flesh and blood” and commenting on his faith, the Greatest of All Teachers asked the question that changed the world, “Sawest thou more than this?”

Think about that for a moment. Why would an omniscient God, who knew exactly what the brother of Jared did and did not see, ask that question? Why? Because He also knew what that question would do to His student. It suggested to the mind of this Jaredite prophet that there was more to see and that he might be permitted to see it. His curiosity piqued, the brother of Jared replied, “Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me” (Ether 3:6–10). And with the brother of Jared’s heart now prepared, the Creator did just that.

What a lesson for all teachers! Certainly the brother of Jared did not ascend the mountain thinking how he might see “all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be . . . even unto the ends of the earth” (Ether 3:25). But something his Teacher did caused his soul to yearn for something more—something deeper.

Another illustration of this principle is found in section 137 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Here the Lord desired to teach the Prophet Joseph vital truths about the salvation of the dead. The Lord did not, however, just jump right in and say, “All who have died without a
knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God” (D&C 137:7).

Instead, the Master Teacher first prepared the heart of the young prophet by causing him to marvel. This He did by showing Joseph the beauty and grandeur of the celestial kingdom. He showed Joseph the gates through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, the blazing throne of God, and streets that appeared to be paved with gold. Then, Joseph saw something he did not expect to find in the celestial kingdom—his brother Alvin, who had died before the ordinances of the gospel had been restored.

Now why would the Lord do that? Of all the possible inheritors of the celestial glory, why Alvin? Perhaps the Lord revealed this information because He knew what seeing Alvin would do to Joseph. The Lord also knew that a pondering heart is often the most receptive to revelation. As Joseph marveled, he heard the voice of inspiration. His question was answered.

And so it is with every student. Our role as teachers is to create that sense of wonder and awe—to stir them up so they seek and search and ask and ponder. As they marvel, the voice of inspiration will distill upon them and whisper to their souls. They will then be taught what a mortal teacher could never teach them—and with a power that mortals do not possess. Then, they will know that the answers to the most important questions come not from gifted instructors but from a loving Heavenly Father through the whisperings of His Spirit.

**Principle 2: Truth Is Often More Appreciated When It Is Discovered**

This principle is powerfully illustrated as Nephi is taught about his father’s vision of the tree of life. After seeing the tree that his father saw, Nephi tells his heavenly instructor that he desired “to know the interpretation thereof.” Now pay particular attention to how his tutor responds to Nephi’s inquiry. Unlike their mortal counterparts often do, this divine teacher and then his angelic assistant do not answer Nephi’s question. Rather, he guides him through a process of discovery that allows Nephi to find his own answers:

“Look,” he said and showed unto Nephi a virgin in the city of Nazareth.

“Nephi, what beholdest thou?”

He knew enough to answer, “A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.”
“Knowest thou the condescension of God?”

Nephi did not know. He knew that God loved His children, but apparently he did not fully understand the relationship between the virgin and the condescension of God.

Nephi’s teacher then explained some of the details—but only enough to allow him to discover the meaning of the tree on his own. Nephi’s teacher told him who the virgin was and whom she held in her arms. Then, the teacher asked of him the very thing that Nephi had asked, “Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?”

This time things were different. Nephi understood and was able to answer his own question:

“Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:11–12, 14–16, 21–22).

As teachers, we should realize the great difference that exists between telling students the answers and guiding them through the process of discovery so they find their own solutions. When Philip met a man from Ethiopia who was reading from the book of Isaiah, Philip asked him, “Underesthoul what thou readest?” “How can I,” was the reply, “except some man should guide me?” (Acts 8:30–31). Notice that he did not ask for someone to tell him; rather, he wanted someone to guide him to understanding.

That is why students need teachers—not to tell them all the answers but rather to guide them to find the answers themselves. Doing so helps students own the truths they discover. They are then more likely to carry those principles and doctrines in their hearts as a permanent possession throughout their lives.

The gospel truths I treasure the most and remember most frequently are those I have discovered on my own. Helpful teachers may have guided my study, but the discovery—the “Ah-ha!” or the epiphany—occurred within my soul. A careless teacher can rob students of such moments. The temptation to answer every question and to have every solution may be more harmful than helpful.

**Principle 3: Truth Can Be More Influential When It Comes from a Peer**

Each lesson has its defining moments. They usually occur at the climax of a discussion when the main point is made and the Holy Ghost powerfully testifies of its truthfulness. Any teacher can tell you how tempting it is to hold on to those moments and reserve them for
themselves. We often want to be the one who says all the important things—that places us in a position of power.

In contrast, as the Savior approached one of those moments, He stepped out of the limelight so someone else might step forward and teach—in this case, a group you might least suspect.

After He had opened the scriptures, “He did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory—yea, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth” (3 Nephi 26:3). Then came the moment when even greater truths were taught—but not by Him:

“And it came to pass that he did teach and minister unto the children of the multitude of whom hath been spoken, and he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people” (v. 14; emphasis added).

Again, I ask, Why would the Savior do that? Why let little ones teach such important truths? Imagine the impact the outcome had on those parents—to hear such marvelous things from their own children.

The Savior knew something that has taken many of us years to figure out—the most influential person in a class is often not the teacher. Teachers are expected to be brilliant—to have all the answers. They are expected to be men and women of faith and deep understanding. But consider what happens when truth is taught or testimony is borne by a friend, a classmate, or, in the example of 3 Nephi, a child.

Consider how this principle relates to modern students. The testimony of their teacher will undoubtedly have a tremendous effect on them. But so also will the testimony of their friends and classmates—perhaps even a greater impact. Think how the life of a high school sophomore might be influenced upon hearing the witness of the senior he or she admires. How might the senior be affected when he or she hears how a gospel principle has changed the life of a sophomore?

Consider what might happen in the lives of young people if we turned more of those defining moments over to our students—if we stepped out of the limelight and let someone else say the important things. Perhaps less of that light would shine on the teacher, but the result in the lives of our students would be tremendous.

May we have more of the desire uttered by John the Baptist when his disciples expressed concern that Jesus was becoming more popular than John. He said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

These three principles will help teachers turn their students to Him,
the True Light. Those students will then be able to stand with shoes tied, ready to face the world that so desperately needs them.

Note

Responding to a whim that I should have recognized as inspiration, I studied Spanish intermittently at the Missionary Training Center for several leisurely months in 2002. Because of an assignment my husband received in the spring of that year, he and I and our fifteen-year-old son moved to Argentina in August. Many of the English-speaking expatriates living and working in Buenos Aires had left because of a recent economic crisis, leaving our new post with only occasional North Americans scattered around the seventeen-million-person metropolis. I immediately wished I had paid better attention in the Spanish classes.

I quickly found an able language tutor and began the arduous trek toward linguistic proficiency, this time engaging in my studies with anxious motivation. My humble but still daunting goal was simple survival in the marketplace and some remote possibility of connection with the non-English-speaking people surrounding me. A few days after we arrived, with my husband away on assignment, our teenaged son and I navigated the several blocks through our big-city neighborhood to the local chapel to attend Sunday meetings, which happened to be stake conference. Surrounded by handsome locals, we struggled to make sense of even a single phrase in the fast-paced discourse. Seeking to find something of fun in our predicament, I handed our displaced son a paper and pencil and offered to pay him a peso for every ten words he could write and define from the mostly unintelligible Spanish talks and
prayers. At the end of two hours and with some desperate teamwork, I owed him five pesos. We were in trouble.

In spite of my best effort and eager pleas for a quick dose of the gift of tongues, the Spanish came too slowly to my stubborn, half-century-old brain tissue. I watched the more agile language acquisition of our teenaged son with admiration and envy. Ah, to be fifteen again. Armed with a deep desire to render myself a more useful contributor than I could be without the ability to communicate more fluently, I continued to plead for heavenly help. In January, after we had been in Argentina for only five months, I received my answer.

When the local Church Education director, Brother Curbelo, telephoned to ask if he could stop by to speak with me, I thought little of it. We often received visitors from the Church. I greeted him with the Spanish pleasantries I had dutifully memorized and then sat down to do my best to manage something of an appropriate conversation that didn’t require much language production from me. A busy man, he didn’t expect long chitchat but rather promptly got to the point. “Hermana Clayton,” he said, “after prayerful consideration, we would like to extend to you the call to serve as the early-morning seminary teacher for the ten youth residing in our Belgrano Ward. The class meets every morning at 6 a.m. beginning on the first day of school in March and continues until summer vacation in November. Will you accept the calling?” My Spanish was limited, but I nonetheless knew enough to offer an honest and spontaneous response: “¡No me diga!” which essentially means, “You’ve got to be kidding!” He wasn’t.

Resisting reason, I accepted. I had taught early-morning seminary for seven years in California before moving to Argentina, so I was familiar with the curriculum. I knew I had relied on discussing scriptures, telling stories, sharing personal experiences, and other language-dependent activities to engage students and promote learning. My skimpy Spanish would certainly preclude the possibility of a comparable style of teaching, but I believe in miracles and I don’t believe in refusing callings, so I responded with a trusting but bewildered “yes.” A full year later, I learned that even the bishop had felt uneasy about having the calling extended. In bishopric meeting, he had asked all three members of the bishopric to write the names of three people they thought might be legitimate to teach the seminary class. The next week, the three men shared their names. All three had written my name as number one. Bewildered, the bishop hesitated, saying, “But she doesn’t speak Spanish!” The men continued the quest another week, only to return with the same impression, so they
extended the call. I’m sure they were fearful for me and undoubtedly at least a little worried about the spiritual growth of those ten youth, but they were eager to follow the prompting they had received.

During the next month, I memorized Spanish phrases, studied interminable verb conjugations, clumsily read Spanish scriptures aloud, and prayed mightily that this leap of faith would qualify me for the heavenly help I so desperately sought. I pled that those faithful students would have by March a teacher whose own deficiencies wouldn’t compromise their right to learn. I didn’t want my barely emerging Spanish to become the focus of our hour. I desired to be a useful tool, not a language-learning service project for them.

I have learned again and again that nothing we make available to the Lord goes to waste. Whatever measure of competence or learning we offer for His glory will surely be well employed. Before moving to Argentina, I had completed a master’s degree in California in educational linguistic development. The degree was designed to enable teachers to work more successfully with non-English-speaking students. I had mistakenly assumed I would use that learning to teach the multilanguage students who comprised our California classrooms. Ironically, the material from that class became the stuff of my preparation as I taught seminary in my own second language. I was not employing the techniques to assist English-language learners; rather, I was employing those techniques to enable myself as a Spanish-language learner to work with my own limited language proficiency.

The strategies included techniques that reinforced learning without depending on sophisticated language fluency. In other words, I avoided extensive teacher presentation and depended instead on student-centered activities. My original motivation had been to eliminate my own need to offer something I couldn’t—namely, a coherent lecture. In the process of avoiding my own glaring weakness, however, I observed students rising to the occasion to take more responsibility for their own learning as they made greater contributions in class. I learned to prepare lessons that required more participation and presentation by the students and much less teacher-focused instruction.

Among the strategies I found valuable were student journals. My own unmistakable limitation caused me to depend more often and more quickly on the masterfully expressed words of the prophets than I had previously done. To supplement my Spanish, I regularly typed beautiful quotations from the prophets and apostles then created short writing assignments to encourage students to apply the concepts found in the quotations and the scriptures in their own lives. The activities
I prepared in advance and inserted in their journals typically required about ten minutes to complete. They included things like scripture analysis, such as comparing the sacrifice of Abraham with Isaac to the sacrifice of the Father with Jesus, or tracing the fall of David and recording the decisions he had made and the results of each. During a portion of another lesson, the students completed a page in their journals. The activity asked them to do a step-by-step analysis of the solutions Moses found when he felt inadequate in his calling as prophet. I listened to those ten Argentine students share their newfound insights in dealing with feelings of inadequacy and lapses in confidence. As they shared their understanding of Moses’s triumph over his deficiencies, I recognized a pattern for myself. We all rejoiced and were edified together.

Additionally, because I had no comfort zone to leave, I was happy to experiment with diverse teaching strategies. We regularly enjoyed student role plays, debates, and interviews. Those imaginative Argentine young people committed themselves with the energetic gusto characteristic of their culture as they played the parts of heroes and villains. The lessons of the scriptures came to life via their dramatic demonstrations of the results of both good and bad choices. I suspect that none of us will forget the immensity of Goliath after having hurled imported North American marshmallows at a life-sized cutout of that fearsome foe. The students expressed spontaneous gratitude for the more manageable size of their personal opponents.

My motivation to find alternatives to my own inability to lecture prompted me to research carefully the audiovisual resources of the Church. For students to discuss and apply, short clips from general conference talks and CES satellite broadcasts provided dependable sources of relevant, eloquent counsel from Church leaders. Occasionally, a simple illustration from the familiar Gospel Art Picture Kit became a beginning point for a student activity wherein each member of the class assumed the role of one of the people shown in the picture. Consistent with their assumed characters, students answered questions about the part they had played in the scene, the reasons for and results of their actions, and the impact their behavior had had on others in the story. By adopting the role of someone other than themselves, they understood the stories more intimately and from different points of view.

Because I teach seminary around the dining-room table in our apartment, I originally had none of the standard classroom equipment in place to use for visual aids. I promptly obtained a white board and easel that became an extension of and supplementation to my own voice. I invested in every color of white-board marker made in
Argentina and then used them all lavishly to prepare what became colorful outlines and activities for each morning’s lesson. Those varied diagrams served as prompts for me and visuals for the students. Class members filled in missing words to complete thoughts, drew lines to connect similar concepts, decoded riddles to capture their attention, and answered puzzling questions to make application. I have found that all students, no matter what their age, like to draw on the board; and occasionally, a student who is particularly artistic can achieve recognition he or she would not otherwise receive. Lorenzo, a new member of the Church who had difficulty reading, was a natural artist. His contributions to our white board secured him an important place of respect among his new peers. Additionally, those students who were visual learners learned more comfortably with the help of the written aids. On our walls and furniture, we posted word strips and displayed pictures, including photos of the students themselves, to brighten the environment and supplement the learning.

My language immaturity was a constant reminder of my dependence on the students for help with the instruction. I had no false sense of confidence in my having all the answers or even possessing the ability to express well the ones I did have. In a quest for class participation, I was motivated to prepare the questions with much thought and prayer I hoped would encourage the students’ genuine contribution to the learning. As they recognized my honest need for their thoughtful participation, they rose ably to the occasion and offered customized insights I would not have known how to present in any language.

Although I had expected my limited Spanish to minimize my ability to connect with my class, my efforts to learn their language became an unexpected bond between the students and me. Those teenagers, like teenagers anywhere, were regularly amused by my errors, and they delighted in offering corrections that were always a benefit to me. On one occasion, as I sought to initiate a discussion of section 45 in the Doctrine and Covenants, I referred repeatedly and with enthusiasm to “la Segunda Vista,” which translates to something nonsensical like “the Second Sight.” With a characteristic twinkle in his eye, Gonzalo, or Toti for short, interrupted. “Hermana, I think you mean la Segunda Venida [the Second Coming].” He was right. I may have lost something of the momentum of my presentation, but I gained a connection with those students, who were amused by the obvious imperfections of their North American teacher. I learned much from those young friends about creating a house of learning as I received correction. We were unmistakably all teachers and all learners in that class.
Because of my imperfect Spanish, I had to listen more attentively to the students’ questions and comments to be sure I had understood them as they had meant them to be understood. I was less likely to jump to conclusions, put words in their mouths, or listen casually to their comments than I might otherwise have been. As a result, I understood with greater clarity the things they expressed. They accommodated my learning by thinking through what they desired to communicate, thereby clarifying their thoughts even to themselves. I understood concepts more thoroughly and heard more subtleties than I would have had I not been obligated to listen with profound attention.

Most important of all, because of my own unquestionable deficiencies, I learned to depend daily and sincerely on heavenly help. I presumed no ability to succeed without the assistance of the Spirit as my constant companion. I trusted in the certain love of the Lord for those deserving students, and I pledged with earnest desire for essential supplementation to my humble efforts that I might be able to reflect the Lord’s love and not detract from it. Even as my Spanish has improved and my desperation has subsided, my commitment to the student-centered strategies I employed has persisted. I finished that first year of teaching seminary in Spanish, then completed a second year, and am anticipating with gratitude a third.

Ironically, my inability to speak fluent and voluminous Spanish became the springboard for my learning to teach without depending on long teacher lectures as the default mode of instruction. As I turned more to the students and the Spirit as the essential participants in the class, I became much more “the guide on the side” rather than “the sage on the stage.” We were all instructed. }


“To Stir Them Up in the Ways of Remembrance”: Lamanites and Memory in the Book of Mormon

J. B. Haws

J. B. Haws is an instructor at the Roy Utah Seminary.

My dad was voted “Friendliest Boy” by his high school classmates. He is a hero of mine for a lot of reasons, but I don’t think that any accolade he has received meant as much to me while I was growing up as did that senior class superlative, “Friendliest Boy.” My mom would tell us how she was simply swept off her feet by this friendly young man, and I wanted to be that way. I wanted to be just as kind and outgoing and friendly. But more often than not, I felt shy and nervous and insecure. Whenever introversion threatened to dominate, however, I would think of my dad. His goodness reminded me of a better way, and I was inspired as I remembered.

What a wonderful gift is memory! And what a wonderful blessing it is to have people in our lives who spark those memories and who motivate us to action through our remembering. President Kimball once asked, “When you look in the dictionary for the most important word, do you know what it is?” Then he answered his own question with this stirring proposal: “It could be ‘remember.’ Because all of you have made covenants—you know what to do and you know how to do it—our greatest need is to remember. That is why everyone goes to sacrament meeting every Sabbath day—to take the sacrament and listen to the priests pray that they ‘may always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them.’ Nobody should ever forget to go to sacrament meeting. ‘Remember’ is the word. ‘Remember’ is the program.”
“‘Remember’ is the program”—that statement seems to resonate so well with us because of our shared experiences in life. So much of righteousness and happiness is caused by our remembering our covenants, and so much of misery and heartache is caused by forgetting the same. Is it any wonder, then, that “the most correct of any book on earth,” the book by whose precepts we all may “get nearer to God . . . than by any other book,”\(^2\) would have as one of its explicit purposes the reminding of “the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever”? (title page of the Book of Mormon). “Remember the words of thy dying father,” Lehi pled with Joseph (2 Nephi 3:25). “Remember . . . the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God,” Helaman pled with Nephi and Lehi (Helaman 5:12). “Remember these things,” Moroni pled in the closing chapter of the book (Moroni 10:27). These pleas, President Benson reminded us, were “meant for us,”\(^3\) and they are everywhere in the Book of Mormon: some form of the word “remember” appears over 180 times in the book’s pages.\(^4\) For our purposes here, what interests us is the very first time the word is used.

At the end of the second chapter in the book of Mormon, the Lord gave Nephi this sober warning: “If it so be that [thy seed] rebel against me, [the seed of thy brethren] shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance” (1 Nephi 2:24). Nephi later recorded that same declaration at the time of his people’s fateful break with the Lamanites (see 2 Nephi 5:25). The literal fulfillment of this prophecy becomes a theme that appears again and again in the Book of Mormon, but in many instances, the Lamanites’ role is less than obvious because their work in stirring up remembrance was often not through scourging. Nephite memories were indeed pricked not only through Lamanite fighting but also through the powerful examples of Lamanite families and Lamanite faith.

The connection between the Lamanites’ actions and the Nephites’ remembering seems worthy of attention for several reasons. First (and this is just an intriguing side note), it is impressive that this theme of the Lamanites’ role in inspiring Nephite remembrance—an idea introduced in only the second chapter of the Book of Mormon—weaves its way throughout the narrative. Noting how often the Lamanites played a crucial role in stirring up the Nephites’ memories speaks to the remarkable internal consistency and inspired authorship/translation of the Book of Mormon. The pervasiveness of this theme—interwoven with so many other recurring themes—resonates with this statement by
John Welch about the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “How could any author keep all of these potential lines of evidence concurrently in his head while dictating the Book of Mormon without notes or a rough draft”—especially considering that the dictation was completed in less than three months’ working time? The suggestion here is that we can identify a very good answer to that question: Joseph Smith really did what he said he did, and that was translate the record by the “gift and power of God” (introduction to the Book of Mormon).

Second, and most important, the varied and sometimes subtle examples of this Lamanite-inspired remembrance of the Lord underscore the purpose and power of the Book of Mormon in our lives: the power to convince us of the divinity of the Savior Jesus Christ and to remind us constantly of the “great things the Lord hath done” anciently (title page of the Book of Mormon). Remembering this past points our minds to the present, to the great things that He can—and does—do in our day, for us. We can be forewarned of the same types of forgetfulness that plagued the Nephites and thus learn from the examples of Lamanite families and faith before we’re faced with scourging. The Lamanites of old, like “[voices] crying from the dust,” can “stir [us] up in the ways of remembrance” as well (2 Nephi 33:13; 1 Nephi 2:24).

Lamanite Fighting

Perhaps the most apparent way in which the Lamanites served to stir up the Nephites to remembrance is through the Lamanites’ fierce fighting. This approach seems to fit especially the Lord’s descriptive warning to Nephi that the Lamanites would be a scourge in times of Nephite rebellion or forgetfulness. Examples of this type of memory-jarring warfare abound in the Book of Mormon, but a few typical instances seem to be especially instructive.

Imagine not having the record of King Benjamin and his people! They were a people who “did contend against” the Lamanites “in the strength of the Lord,” a people only three or four generations removed from a time when “the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed” because so many had forgotten the crucial connection between righteousness and prosperity (Words of Mormon 1:14; see also Omni 1:5–6, 10). Benjamin’s father, Mosiah, had led “as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord” to “flee” from the land of Nephi and find the land of Zarahemla (Omni 1:12). Thus, the whole course of the Nephite nation, together with the national salvation of the floundering Mulekites, turned on this response of righteous Nephites to promptings from the Lord. Those who remembered and recognized
prophetic counsel when faced with an onslaught of Lamanite attacks were blessed with a deliverance that was both physical and spiritual.

King Benjamin understood well this miracle of deliverance that had come to his father’s people, as well as to his own people (see Omni 1:24; Words of Mormon 1:13, 18). A solemn commemoration of that deliverance seems to be at least one of the primary motivations behind Benjamin’s final, unforgettable speech. He desired to remind his people that if the Lord “had not extended his arm in the preservation of our fathers they must have fallen into the hands of the Lamanites, and become victims to their hatred” (Mosiah 1:14). King Benjamin’s subsequent call for deeper righteousness was founded on that which he had witnessed, “that if this highly favored people of the Lord should fall into transgression, and become a wicked and an adulterous people, that the Lord [would] deliver them up, that thereby they become weak like unto their brethren” (Mosiah 1:13; compare Words of Mormon 1:12–18). Benjamin’s words seem to take on a fresh urgency in that context: “All that [God] requires of you is to keep his commandments, . . . for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you . . . and ye are still indebted unto him, . . . therefore, of what have ye to boast?” (Mosiah 2:22, 24); or “Watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, . . . and continue in the faith” (Mosiah 4:30); or “I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, . . . that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called” (Mosiah 5:12). How vivid had their encounters with the Lamanites made this fervent plea: “O man, remember, and perish not” (Mosiah 4:30).

The immediacy of King Benjamin’s testimony must have been powerfully reinforced in the minds of the people when, during the reign of his son Mosiah, the descendants of Zeniff’s long-lost band were reunited with their Zarahemla compatriots. This newly returned group of Nephites told of Abinadi, whose prophetic message had fallen on mostly deaf ears in King Noah’s court. Tragically, many of Noah’s people clamored for the life of that fearless prophet who challenged them to “remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved” (Mosiah 16:13). With the exception of Alma and his fugitive band of believers, Noah’s people refused to remember. Again, Lamanite aggression was instrumental in reminding this people of the promises of the prophet they had initially ignored.

Their “carnal security” (2 Nephi 28:21) was shattered when Gideon’s serious misgivings about the king were tragically realized in Noah’s treachery and cowardice when faced with an attacking Lamanite army (see Mosiah 19). The literal fulfillment of Abinadi’s prophecies, coupled
with subsequent years of Lamanite dominance, softened the hearts of these same Nephites, now ruled by Noah’s son, Limhi. By the time that Ammon’s search party discovered Limhi’s people, much had changed. This people that had once congratulated themselves on their invincibility now recognized that “because of [their] iniquities and abominations” they were “brought . . . into bondage” (Mosiah 7:20). They now longed to join with those who had “entered into a covenant with God to serve him” (Mosiah 21:31). The connection between this new humility—a humility largely compelled by Lamanite victories—and memory is highlighted in Limhi’s call to remember the Israelite exodus and to see in that exodus story a glimmer of hope: “If ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage” (Mosiah 7:33).

The concurrent experiences of Alma’s group of long-suffering Saints speak to the role that oppression under Lamanite (and dissident Nephite) overlords played in their humble petitions for divine deliverance—yet with an important contrast to Limhi’s group. Limhi’s people “murmured . . . because of their afflictions” (again, mostly self-induced afflictions), but they finally “did humble themselves” only after being “[driven] back” and “suffering much loss” during three successive attempts to avenge their losses by taking up arms against the Lamanites (Mosiah 21:8, 11, 15). Theirs seemed to be a collective memory that engaged only slowly; correspondingly, “the Lord was slow to hear their cry because of their iniquities” (v. 15). One of the reassuring messages of the Book of Mormon is that “nevertheless,” even in this case, “the Lord did hear their cries,” although he did not “yet . . . see fit to deliver them out of bondage” (v. 15). Yet Limhi’s people apparently had more to remember—like, for example, the “widows and . . . children” among them or the importance of covenants and baptism (see vv. 17, 33).

On the other hand, though Alma’s group was also suffering at the hands of Lamanite captors, their experience was markedly different. When Alma’s covenant community was discovered by a wandering contingent of the Lamanite army that had become lost while looking for Limhi’s escaping people, they were understandably “much frightened because of the appearance of the Lamanites” (Mosiah 23:26). But in this case, instead of fleeing or fighting, options that Noah’s and Limhi’s people had variously exercised, Alma “exhorted them that they should not be frightened, but that they should remember the Lord their God and he would deliver them” (v. 27). This people did not need multiple defeats or tragic bloodshed to quicken their memories;
instead, at Alma’s urging, they “hushed their fears, and began to cry unto the Lord that he would soften the hearts of the Lamanites” (v. 28). “And it came to pass that the Lord did” (v. 29; emphasis added). The contrast between Limhi’s group’s “[murmuring] because of their afflictions” and Alma’s group’s “[crying] mightily to God” and then “[submitting] cheerfully” points to a lesson that finds culmination in the way each group was eventually delivered (Mosiah 21:6; 24:10, 15; compare also Mosiah 22:5–16 and 24:16–25). This telling juxtaposition of parallel histories speaks to us: the message is memory but is even more specifically the speed and degree of willingness with which our spiritual memories respond to promptings!

So many other stories in the Book of Mormon come to mind when we think about Lamanite fighting and Nephite remembrance. The “great . . . afflictions” that resulted from the combined Amlicite and Lamanite attacks had “awakened” the Nephites “to a remembrance of their duty” (Alma 4:3). This awakening had a profound effect on the spiritual readiness of many in the Nephite church. Alma, who had prayed to be “an instrument in [the Lord’s] hands to save and preserve this people” in battle, now was able to be an instrument “in bearing down in pure testimony” to save and preserve the people, “to stir them up in remembrance of their duty” while their hearts were open (Alma 2:30; 4:19).

Here we might think of Captain Moroni, who based his title of liberty rallying cry on sacred memory and then led his armies to victory against the invading Lamanites (see Alma 46:12). Moroni’s efforts in heightening remembrance of covenantal responsibilities make this surprising summary more understandable (and most applicable for our day): “But behold there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni” (Alma 50:23).

Yet, in the days of another Moroni, Mormon’s son, the terrible concluding scenes of the Book of Mormon provide the starkest examples of Lamanite scourging and Nephite forgetfulness when Nephite barbarism and depravity are contrasted with that of the Lamanites (see Moroni 9:7–22). The tragic conclusion of the book, where the Nephites are scourged to the point of extinction by the Lamanites because the Nephites would not remember, makes Mormon’s lament that much more poignant: “O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!” (Mormon 6:17). Through the Nephites’ departing, rejecting, and forgetting, we hear the echoes of Mormon’s pained “and thus we see” observations (Helaman 12:3).
Although warfare and destruction seem to best fit the “scourge” metaphor, we also see other subtle ways in which Lamanites served to stir up Nephite remembrance. We need something of the perspective of a Zeniff, who saw “that which was good among” the Lamanites and “contended” for that goodness against the “blood-thirsty” Nephite commander who wanted only to destroy them (Mosiah 9:1–2). We see evidence of that goodness in the ways that righteous Lamanite families also reminded the Nephites of the most important covenants.

**Lamanite Families**

Jacob’s powerful reproof of Nephite husbands and fathers is made all the more memorable because of his incisive comparisons with their Lamanite contemporaries. His words must have carried a special pointedness, as evidenced by our considering the self-righteous way in which many Nephites despised and dismissed the Lamanites for “their filthiness and the cursing which hath come upon their skins” (Jacob 3:5). “Behold,” Jacob solemnly told his people, “the Lamanites ... are more righteous than you” (v. 5). He used the examples of Lamanite husbands and fathers who were loving and loyal and who—though blinded by incorrect traditions—were living more righteous lives than were many of the Nephites because the Lamanites had not “broken the hearts of [their] tender wives, and lost the confidence of [their] children” (Jacob 2:35; see also Jacob 3:3–12). Importantly, Jacob noted that the Lamanites had “not forgotten the commandment of the Lord” regarding marriage (Jacob 3:5). Jacob tied the Lamanites’ family fidelity directly to the importance of Nephite memory, pleading with his people to “revile no more against [the Lamanites] because of the darkness of their skins” but instead “remember your own filthiness” and then, most important, “remember your children, how that ye have grieved their hearts because of the example that ye have set before them” (Jacob 3:9–10).

Along with this powerful Book of Mormon discourse on marriage, one of the book’s most significant lessons about righteous parenting also comes from the records of a Lamanite community. The valiant sons of Helaman attributed their unshakable faith to the teachings of their converted Anti-Nephi-Lehi mothers. Helaman obviously was moved by their faithfulness, as were their fellow soldiers—and as Mormon himself eventually was, judging by the amount of precious room on the plates he dedicated to their story.

When Helaman’s two thousand young warriors were pressed unexpectedly into battle, he reported to Captain Moroni that he “never had ... seen so great courage, nay, not amongst all the Nephites” (Alma
56:45). Almost as if in answer to some unspoken question about what made these stripling soldiers so courageous, so “true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted,” Helaman explained that “they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 53:20; 56:47). The very fact that Helaman could write that the young men “rehearsed . . . the words of their mothers” says something about the deep impression that parental faith—and, undoubtedly, oft-repeated testimony—had made on these sons (Alma 56:48; emphasis added). And understandably so—thiers were parents who had demonstrated in the most real sense that they were willing to “suffer even unto death rather than commit sin” (Alma 24:19).

Significant also is the fact that in a time when Captain Moroni was struggling against dissidents who “withheld . . . provisions from” the Nephite armies, “the fathers of those . . . two thousand sons” sent “many provisions” to Helaman and his men (Alma 60:9; 56:27). These people of Ammon were so “perfectly honest” that they fully honored the initial compact they had made with the Nephites upon “[inheriting] the land of Jershon”: the Nephites would “guard them from their enemies . . . on condition that they [would] give . . . a portion of their substance to assist” in the Nephite army’s maintenance (Alma 27:24, 27). We thus understand a little better why their sons would “obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness” (Alma 57:21). As they were raised in homes where such exactness was natural, exactness had also become their nature.

In battle after battle, “their preservation was astonishing to our whole army,” Helaman reported to Moroni, “and we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God” (Alma 57:26). When “the remainder of [the Nephite] army [was] about to give way before the Lamanites, behold, those two thousand and sixty were firm and undaunted,” such that they often inspired their fellow soldiers to “take courage” and to “remember the Lord their God from day to day” (Alma 57:20; 58:12, 40). The role these young men played in stirring up faith among their companions explains why their miraculous deliverance brought “joy” to the “whole army” (Alma 57:25).

We should not be surprised, then, that this Anti-Nephi-Lehi community affected the Nephite church for a generation. It began with the way in which Nephite perceptions of the Lamanites were changed by the missionary success of the sons of Mosiah. Initially, Ammon recalled, their countrymen ridiculed Mosiah’s sons for even imagining that they could “convince the Lamanites of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers, as stiffnecked a people as they [were]” (Alma 26:24).
Those Nephites “laughed” Ammon and his brothers “to scorn,” and that scorn stung to the point that the missionaries “were about to turn back” (Alma 26:23, 27). But they did not turn back—because they were “comforted” with the Lord’s promise that He would “give unto [them] success” (Alma 26:27). Success, indeed! Those earlier naysayers scarcely could have imagined the change that would occur in thousands of Lamanite hearts. That change, both in Nephite perceptions and in Lamanite beliefs, highlights a third way in which the Lamanites stirred up remembrance among the Nephites: by their faith.

**Lamanite Faith**

Their was a brand of faith so remarkable and exemplary that Mormon, with his unique perspective, could write that “as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in [the preaching of Ammon and his brethren], and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away” (Alma 23:6). The contrast between these constant and faithful Lamanites, as opposed to those apostate and “more hardened” Nephite dissenters who “had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then [had] fallen away into sin and transgression,” was not lost on Mormon, and neither should it be lost on us (Alma 24:30).

King Lamoni and his wife seem to be representative of this remarkable faith. Lamoni’s humble willingness to “believe all [of Ammon’s] words” was matched by his wife’s willingness to “believe,” even though she “had no witness save [Ammon’s] word” (Alma 18:23; 19:9). Ammon was so moved at the queen’s simple trust that he told her, “Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith” (Alma 19:10). Then, like Mormon, he was moved to describe that faith in superlative fashion: “I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites” (v. 10). Blessings did follow their faith. Lamoni testified, “I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name” (v. 13). His wife later “cried with a loud voice, saying: O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell!” (v. 29). The depth of their conversion, and the subsequent conversion of thousands of their people, is evident in the realization that “their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil” (v. 33).

Perhaps nothing better symbolizes that change in desire than the burying of their weapons, followed by the collective willingness of those converted Lamanites to lay down their lives rather than break covenants. Something is sacred in the type of “greater-love” sacrifice that led these Lamanites to “lie down and perish, and [praise] God even in the very act
of perishing under the sword” (Alma 24:23; see also John 15:13). They stirred up many of their own people to remembrance in this instance, such that “the people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain” (Alma 24:26). In a tragic turn of dramatic irony, this very Lamanite army that had been driven to kill their converted countrymen became enraged at shedding the blood of their own people, and they unleashed that rage on the Nephite city Ammonihah, the city whose hard-hearted residents seemed to be the spiritual antithesis of the submissive Anti-Nephi-Lehies. A series of battles and setbacks followed as the descendants of King Noah’s priests urged the Lamanites on and on until finally, sadly, the Lamanites again assumed the role of “scourge,” hunting “the seed” of those wicked priests who had refused to remember prophetic warnings (see Alma 25:1–9). Yet even in the midst of these terrible tragedies—largely because of them, really—still more Lamanites joined “the people of God” and did “bury their weapons of war” (Alma 25:13–14).

When we consider all these developments, we should then think of the miracle that occurred when the Nephites offered the land of Jershon to their former mortal enemies! The report of “all the things that had happened . . . in the land of Nephi, among their brethren, the Lamanites” must have powerfully moved the Nephites to remember this truth: the Lord’s “arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name” (Alma 27:20; 19:36). This outcome brings the story full circle, to the unforgettable contributions of those fearless stripling warriors in inspiring the Nephites to victory after victory.

A generation later, Helaman’s sons Nephi and Lehi led another mission among the Lamanites, and the success they enjoyed was equally miraculous. The Nephites had suffered a devastating blow, losing Zarahemla to a combined force of Lamanites and Nephite dissenters. Yet “this great loss . . . would not have happened had it not been for their wickedness” (Helaman 4:11). Pride, that spiritual cancer, had led the Nephites to foolishly “[boast] in their own strength”; it seems only fitting, therefore, that “they were left in their own strength” and “[became] weak, like unto their brethren the Lamanites . . . [such] that the Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them” (Helaman 4:13, 24; emphasis added). This recognition was the beginning of remembrance. In addition, the Lamanite conquest of Zarahemla proved providential: Nephi and Lehi preached to both the dissenters and to the Lamanites in Zarahemla, and this exposure to the “great power and authority” of their preaching led to the baptisms of “eight thousand of the Lamanites who were in the land of Zarahemla,” as well as the baptisms of “many of
those dissenters” (Helaman 5:18–19). Interestingly, a hardened group of expatriate Nephites first associated themselves with the Lamanite army and then, because of that association, invaded Zarahemla, where they unknowingly opened a way for their close contact with the gospel message. Remembrance for these dissidents meant “immediately [returning] to the Nephites to endeavor to repair unto them the wrongs which they had done” (Helaman 5:17).

Another Nephite dissenter experienced a similar type of conversion through the work of Nephi and Lehi when they moved on to preach in the land of Nephi. While being held in prison, Nephi and Lehi were “encircled about with a pillar of fire . . . that . . . burned them not” (Helaman 5:24). Their Lamanite captors were astonished to the point of virtual paralysis. In that setting, “a Nephite by birth, who had once belonged to the church of God but had dissented,” was moved by the fear and awe evident in his Lamanite neighbors (v. 35). Remembrance was rekindled in this Aminadab, and he told the Lamanites (and he surely spoke to himself, as well), “You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ” (v. 41). What an awakening this was for Aminadab, as he remembered that “when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you” (v. 41). The cloud of darkness was removed from overshadowing all of them; but in an especially poignant way, the real cloud of darkness was apparently removed from overshadowing him as he remembered faith in Christ.

These converted Lamanite multitudes took their newfound enthusiasm for the gospel back to the struggling Nephites and “did preach with exceedingly great power and authority, unto the bringing down many of them into the depths of humility” (Helaman 6:5). Unfortunately, however, in these dark days preceding the Savior’s ministry among the Book of Mormon peoples, the Nephites were all but consumed by the evils of secret combinations. Not so with the faithful Lamanite converts. Importantly, the Lamanites “utterly destroyed” the “band of robbers” from among them by “[preaching] the word of God” to them (v. 37). Is it any wonder that the “Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words”? (v. 36). In language reminiscent of Jacob, Nephi pointed to the Lamanites to remind the Nephites that “they are more righteous than you” (Helaman 7:24).

The message was one that certainly hit home for some because only one generation later, “all the Lamanites who had become converted unto the Lord did unite with their brethren, the Nephites
against those Gadianton robbers” (3 Nephi 2:12). This unity in righteousness is a high point in the long history of Nephite-Lamanite interaction, and the unity prefigured that coming age when universal remembrance of Christian covenants would mean that no “manner of -ites” was found among the people (4 Nephi 1:17). Conversely, forgetting and rebelling against those covenants are the outcomes that eventually destroyed that “in-one”-ness (see 4 Nephi 1:11, 38). In the end, Mormon’s summary proved to be a regrettably accurate description of Nephite remembrance and Lamanite scourging: “And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, . . . they will not remember him” (Helaman 12:3). His sober lament seems to beg one crucial question: What about us?

“For Our Day . . .”

“We should constantly ask ourselves,” President Benson counseled, “‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?’” This penetrating question leads to discoveries that are both personal and powerful, confirming President Benson’s promise that “there is example after example of how that question will be answered.” Such examples can make this recurring Book of Mormon theme of stirring up remembrance more vital, more meaningful.

When we think of Lamanites like Abish or Samuel, stalwart Saints who risked serious personal harm to share their testimonies of the truth, we hear President James E. Faust’s call to rise to a new level of courageous obedience. Are we ready for the consecrated commitment of Lamoni’s father, who expressed in heartfelt prayer a willingness to “give away all my sins to know thee”? (Alma 22:18).

In a day when President Gordon B. Hinckley has “[issued] a challenge” to “run from the tide of sleaze that would overcome” us, the fidelity of Lamanite husbands and fathers of Jacob’s day can point the direction in which we should run. Theirs is a clarion call for “husbands [who] love their wives” and “husbands . . . [who] love their children” (Jacob 3:7). Can our resolve be strengthened to live in such a way that no “sobbings of [the] hearts” of our wives and children ever need “ascend up to God against” us? (Jacob 2:35).

In the midst of the book of Alma’s account of the major Nephite-Lamanite wars comes this observation, rich in symbolism for us: “The Nephites were not slow to remember the Lord their God”; therefore, “they could not be taken in [the] snares” of their enemies (Alma
What a motto for our day! When we think of those all-too-present snares, (which sometimes seem overwhelmingly all too present!), we can remember the Lamanites’ success in destroying the Gadianton robbers from among them. Their victory came through preaching the gospel! Do we hear what this Lamanite triumph can say to us about protecting the sanctity of our homes and our “people”?

Recently, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland reminded us that “no child in this Church should be left with uncertainty about his or her parents’ devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His Church, and the reality of living prophets and apostles.”

The examples of the people of Ammon can prompt all parents to consider carefully whether we are doing what Elder Holland went on to recommend: “Live the gospel as conspicuously as you can.” Do we specifically and repeatedly teach our children that “there is a just God, and whosoever does not doubt, . . . they should be preserved by his marvelous power”? (Alma 57:26). Can they “rehearse” what we have taught, and can they confidently say, “We do not doubt our [parents] knew it”? (see Alma 56:48). Perhaps even more important, are we, like those Lamanite parents, “perfectly honest”? Is obeying with exactness our nature? Do our future warriors see that in us? Elder Holland asked, “Have our children ever unexpectedly opened a closed door and found us on our knees in prayer?”

That is the type of image of faith that these sons of Helaman must have seen in their parents.

“God will have a humble people,” President Benson told the Church. “Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble.” The underlying message of much of the Nephite-Lamanite history seems to come down to this: so much of pride is essentially forgetting, and so much of humility is essentially remembering. “Let us choose to be humble,” President Benson counseled, and it seems reasonable that representatives from the ranks of both the Nephites and Lamanites would commend his words to us. Thus, though the words are President Kimball’s, we can read them in the spirit of those prophets who “speak unto [us] as if [we] were present” (Mormon 8:35): “‘Remember’ is the program.”
Notes


4. Computer-searchable texts of all of the standard works can be found in the “Gospel Library” section of the Church’s Web site, www.lds.org. A search for all words with the stem “rememb-” in the Book of Mormon yields the figure used here (183 instances).


Light or Dark, Freedom or Bondage: Enhancing Book of Mormon Themes through Contrasts

Blair G. Van Dyke

Blair G. Van Dyke is a principal in the Church Educational System and a part-time instructor of ancient scripture at BYU.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

There is a power in the [Book of Mormon] which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. . . . You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called “the words of life” (see D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance. These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—these are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God.¹

“A serious study” of the Book of Mormon will require more than a cursory reading of the text. Indeed, in most cases, a serious study of the Book of Mormon involves analyzing the characters, sermons, doctrines, and stories in search of significant themes that the authors and editors intentionally included in the book. Once significant themes are identified, serious students of the Book of Mormon will carefully consider, weigh, and ponder these themes until principles of righteous living emerge, the application of which leads to the more abundant life that President Benson promised. In this light, a theme is like a golden thread laced through a strand of pearls, allowing each pearl to be displayed collectively in a way that enhances its beauty.
With this in mind, we should enhance our ability as religious educators as well as the ability of our students to identify and consider themes in the Book of Mormon. Themes are developed and expressed in literature through character development, stories, conflict, appeasement, and, among other things, contrasts. This article will show how a study of contrasts can enhance our understanding of major themes in the Book of Mormon, thereby enabling us to identify, analyze, apply, and present guiding principles couched in the scriptures.

In literature, contrasts are the placing of one character or scenario next to another in such a way that differences are accentuated and easily identified so the writer can teach an important principle.

One example of contrasts from the New Testament is John’s placement of Nicodemus’s nighttime conversation with Jesus in juxtaposition to the Samaritan woman’s midday discussion with the Master at Jacob’s Well. Her acceptance of Jesus brings her into the light, whereas Nicodemus’s refusal to follow Jesus leaves him in darkness (see John 3–4). Other contrasts in the Old Testament are Abel and Cain (Moses 5), Abraham and Lot (Genesis 18–19), and Judah and Joseph (Genesis 38–39).

Contrasts, however, are not limited to character pairs. Not uncommonly, we find in one character’s life all the elements mentioned above. The contrast is found in a “before-and-after format.” For instance, Saul as a rebel against Jesus Christ and His followers prior to his experience on the road to Damascus may be profitably compared to Saul after the Lord appeared to him and in connection with his subsequent repentance and life service (see Acts 8–9). This comparison accentuates the power of the Atonement to change lives that are deeply riddled with sin. Furthermore, we can even compare entire groups of people, such as the fear-stricken armies of Israel before David slew Goliath and the courage of those same warriors after David’s triumph over the giant (see 1 Samuel 17). The contrasts evidenced in each of these examples are explicit enough to serve as a charge to the reader to pursue goodness and faith and to eschew evil and fear. The greater the contrast, the clearer the choice between right and wrong, light and darkness, virtue and vice, and faith and fear.

Contrasts are employed throughout the text of the Book of Mormon. In most cases, we cannot possibly determine whether a specific author made the comparison in the text or whether Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, or Moroni did so during the compiling and editing process. Even so, we would be ill advised to conclude, as some may be prone to do, that this literary device was unknown to Book of Mormon authors and that the appearance of contrasts in the text is the product of clever
literary analysis conducted by modern scholars. Given the use of contrasts by Old Testament authors (such as Moses) who influenced Book of Mormon authors in their style and presentation, we would be concluding erroneously that the use of contrasts in the Book of Mormon “just happened” unbeknownst to the authors and editors.

The purposes of this article are to identify four major themes in the Book of Mormon and to explore how contrasts accentuate these themes. Specifically, we will consider (1) deep-seated discipleship, (2) the nature of true conversion through repentance, (3) the significance of standing as a witness of God by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and (4) the value of establishing internal and external peace among God’s people. These four themes are threaded throughout the entire Book of Mormon, and our understanding of each is heightened through the use of contrasts. Religious educators who foster their abilities to identify and work with contrasts in the Book of Mormon will be able to uncover themes and principles that, when applied, enrich our lives and naturally lend themselves to varied approaches of student participation, discovery, and application in the classroom.

Deep-Seated Discipleship: Laman, Lemuel, and Nephi

Deep-seated discipleship is a theme that runs throughout the Book of Mormon wherein we learn that, spiritually speaking, we stand or fall based upon our willingness to submit to the will of God. For example, the account of Lehi’s initial theophany is instructive. Lehi beheld the Father sitting upon His throne and Jesus Christ descending out of heaven in a cloud of light that exceeded the brightness of the sun. He was accompanied by twelve apostolic witnesses whose luster was beyond the brightness of the stars (see 1 Nephi 1:9–10). Jesus approached Lehi with a book and bade him to read. He read about many great and marvelous things, was filled with the Spirit, and was faithful and obedient to a commission to preach against the wickedness of the people of Jerusalem, even at the peril of his own life (see 1 Nephi 1:11–19; 2:1–3). His feelings were deep and poignant and moved him to righteous acts. Such is the case with every character in the Book of Mormon of spiritual consequence. Jacob, Enos, Benjamin, Alma, Mormon, Moroni, and many others all had personal spiritual experiences that led them to become deeply devoted disciples. When we look at contrast for comparison, the compilers of the Book of Mormon also chronicled the antitheses of deep-seated discipleship. This was the case with Laman and Lemuel. They serve as a contrast to Nephi, which is particularly helpful for those seeking to increase the depth of their discipleship.
We must remember that following their escape from Jerusalem, Lehi’s family traveled in the wilderness to the borders of the Red Sea. After three additional days of travel, Lehi pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water, built an altar, offered sacrifices to the Lord, and taught his family. Laman and Lemuel received specific instructions from their father, who challenged Laman to be like the river near their camp, “continually running into the fountain of all righteousness!” (1 Nephi 2:9). Similarly, Lemuel was admonished to be like the mighty canyon in which they had pitched their tents, “firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!” (1 Nephi 2:10).

Nephi informs the reader that these admonitions were essential because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 2:11). He then provides at least eight characteristics or actions of his older brothers to illustrate their pathway to spiritual dissension. According to Nephi, Laman and Lemuel murmured exceedingly, denied the revelations of God, placed their hearts upon their inheritance in Jerusalem, lacked faith, knew not the dealings of God, rejected the words of the prophets, were murderous, and stood confounded before the Lord (see 1 Nephi 2:11–14).

Although Laman’s and Lemuel’s specific responses to Lehi’s exhortations are not recorded in the Book of Mormon, we are left to understand that they countered their father by rising up and uttering words against him. Despite their defiance, Lehi was so full of the Spirit that his words caused Laman’s and Lemuel’s “frames [to] shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore, they did as he commanded them” (1 Nephi 2:14).

Here, Nephi provides the reader with a fuller character sketch of himself. This is curious when we understand the fact that he easily could have provided this introduction on the heels of the opening lines of the Book of Mormon wherein he explained that he was born of goodly parents, had seen many afflictions in his days, and was highly favored of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 1:1). The fact that he places his character sketch immediately after that of Laman and Lemuel strongly suggests an intention to compare the two portrayals. Thus readers see a clear difference between the deep-seated discipleship of Nephi and the faithless and uncommitted dispositions of Laman and Lemuel.

For example, although Laman and Lemuel “did murmur in many things” (1 Nephi 2:11), Nephi had “great desires to know of the mysteries of God” (1 Nephi 2:16). Likewise, although Laman and Lemuel found the prophecies and visions of their father to be distasteful and useless (1 Nephi 2:11), Nephi yearned for revelations from God, caus-
ing him to “cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me” (1 Nephi 2:16). Although his brothers lusted after worldly inheritances, Nephi possessed a soft heart (likely a reward for turning from worldliness). In contrast to his brothers, Nephi was not rebellious, and he testified of the Lord’s manifestations, sought the Lord diligently, was humble (see 1 Nephi 2:16–17, 19), and was trusted to be a spiritual leader and teacher over his brethren (see 1 Nephi 2:22).

The nature and importance of discipleship is a significant theme in the Book of Mormon. Nephi’s description of Laman and Lemuel’s unwillingness to strive to become deeply committed disciples is most helpful. We learn from Laman and Lemuel that murmuring, materialism, rebellion, and faithlessness lead to eventual misery. We easily determine the fruits of their decisions and therefore firmly resolve not to follow their course. The character of Nephi, on the other hand, illustrates the fundamental elements of deep-seated discipleship, such as greater desires to know the mysteries of God; the importance of fervent prayer and the receipt of personal revelation; the essentiality of a soft, pliable, and teachable heart that is open to follow the will of God; and a refusal to rebel against the Almighty. The following chart provides a concise view of Nephi’s use of contrasts. From this chart, we see the importance of deep-seated discipleship. Nephi serves as a model of ideal discipleship in 600 BC as well as today. Simply, the contrasts beckon us to follow his example of dedication to the Lord.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Nephi 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laman and Lemuel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Murmured about many things (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Revelations from God were foolish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Worldly inheritance was paramount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Faithless (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Knew not the dealings of God (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rejected the words of prophets (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Possessed murderous dispositions (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Confounded before the Lord (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nephi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Had great desires to know mysteries of God (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cried unto the Lord and was answered (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Possessed a soft heart (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Was not rebellious (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Testified of the Lord’s manifestations (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sought the Lord diligently (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Was humble (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Was trusted to be a spiritual leader/teacher (22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Nature of True Conversion: Alma prior to Repentance—Alma after Repentance

A second major theme in the Book of Mormon is true conversion through repentance and trust in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. For example, Enos, who hungered after the cleansing power of the Atonement and then through fervent prayer, came to know he had been forgiven and cleansed (see Enos 1:1–5). The people of Ammon were so intent on coming to Christ that they buried their weapons of rebellion and covenanted to trust Christ and never fight again, which led Mormon to describe them as firm in the faith and willing to “suffer even unto death rather than commit sin” (Alma 24:19). At the age of fifteen, Mormon “was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus” (Mormon 1:15). He possessed the spiritual stamina to remain staunchly loyal to the Almighty while all around him masses of Nephites “willfully rebelled against their God” (Mormon 1:16).

In addition to the above examples of this prominent Book of Mormon theme, the conversion of Alma the Younger provides a template for determining whether true conversion has transpired in the heart of an individual. The contrast between his life prior to conversion and his life after his repentance enhances the reader’s understanding of the importance of conversion through a mighty change of heart (see Alma 5:14).

We have no record of Alma’s childhood. We see hints that he may have been born in Helam, the colony established by his father following their flight from the Waters of Mormon (see Alma 5:5). In Helam, they were put into bondage by Amulon, one of the wicked priests of King Noah (see Mosiah 23:1–20, 32–39). Following their miraculous escape, they traveled through the wilderness to Zarahemla where the elder Alma eventually became the high priest of the Church, which was organized under the authorization of King Mosiah (see Mosiah 24:16–25; 25).

At some point, Alma the Younger turned from the teachings of his father and embraced idolatry, materialism, and a lust for power. Given his unique childhood, which likely included his experiences with the privations of bondage, his witnessing miracles attendant to their release from Helam, and his father’s call to the highest office in the Church, his rebellion is even more acute. He pursued, with the four royal sons of Mosiah, a scheme to destroy the Church of God. To counter the efforts of Alma the Younger, God sent an angel to the prodigal youth. The angel’s power was so singular that his voice shook the earth, and his message moved Alma to choose a path of repentance. The ministry of Alma that followed was so great that one latter-day Apostle referred to him as “the American Paul.”
In short, the dramatic epiphany associated with Alma’s conversion is so rare and exceptional that President Ezra Taft Benson warned:

Becoming Christlike is a lifetime pursuit and very often involves growth and change that is slow, almost imperceptible. The scriptures record remarkable accounts of men whose lives changed dramatically, in an instant, as it were: Alma the Younger, [and] Paul on the road to Damascus. . . . Such astonishing examples of the power to change even those steeped in sin give confidence that the Atonement can reach even those deepest in despair.

But we must be cautious as we discuss these remarkable examples. Though they are real and powerful, they are the exception more than the rule. For every [Alma] . . . there are hundreds and thousands of people who find the process of repentance much more subtle, much more imperceptible. Day by day they move closer to the Lord, little realizing they are building a godlike life. They live quiet lives of goodness, service, and commitment. They are like the Lamanites, who the Lord said “were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20; emphasis added).

With this caution in mind, we may plumb the text of Mosiah 27 in search of principles related to conversion that stand independently of the dramatic angelic visitation to Alma. Upon closer examination, the contrasts that emerge from the text allow us to consider what happened in Alma’s heart (the fruits of conversion) as opposed to how that change was initiated (an angelic visitation). Indeed, even after the thunderous visit of the angel, we learn that Alma was brought to Christ only through repentance (see Mosiah 27:24). Additionally, Alma’s repentance and deep conversion came only after he fasted and prayed for many days to know that his redemption was sure (see Alma 5:33–46). The angel was able to declare Christ to Alma, but only Alma’s “repenting nigh unto death” (Mosiah 27:28) resulted in redemption (see Mosiah 27:29). So it is with us. The experience or, more likely, the experiences that bring us to the knowledge of our need for Jesus are not the saving factor—coming to Christ through repentance is. Therefore, Christ, not the angel, is the foundation upon which all lasting change rests (see Helaman 5:12; Moses 7:53). At this level of analysis, Alma’s spiritual rebirth becomes a standard that may be applied by all who seek a change of heart.

This example provides at least eight clear points of contrast between Alma’s character before his mighty change of heart and his disposition after he embraced the gospel of Christ. Before his conversion, Alma was an unbeliever who bitterly rejected Jesus as the Savior (see Mosiah
he embraced wickedness and darkness (see Mosiah 27:8, 29); as a gifted orator, he used flattery to deceive; he led many people to do iniquity; he hindered the prosperity of the Church; he stole the hearts (or manipulated the desires) of the people; he camouflaged wickedness in secrecy; and the intent of his rebellion was to destroy the Church of God (see Mosiah 27:8–11). Mormon describes the sons of Mosiah as “the very vilest of sinners” (Mosiah 28:4), and the way Alma is depicted gives us every reason to believe that he was, in every way, their peer in wickedness.

After recounting Alma’s repentance, Mormon lists at least eight contrasting characteristics or actions that are indicative of one who has experienced the cleansing power of Christ’s Atonement. For example, because of his repentance, Alma was redeemed of the Lord (see Mosiah 27:24). Instead of continuing to embrace wickedness and darkness, Alma was born of the Spirit and brought to the light (see Mosiah 27:25, 29). In the place of flattery intended to deceive, Alma used the power of language to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 27:32). Instead of leading people to do iniquity, he imparted consolation to all and confirmed the faith in the hearts and minds of all who would hear him (see Mosiah 27:33). Furthermore, he traveled extensively to build up the Church, strove zealously to repair the spiritual injuries he had caused, avoided secrecy by publishing all the things he had seen, and, finally, became an instrument in the hands of God for the rest of his life (see Mosiah 27:35–36).

The nature of true conversion through repentance and trust in the Atonement of Jesus Christ constitutes a major theme in the Book of Mormon. The comparison in this case allows the reader to understand more clearly that true conversion has not so much to do with the events surrounding conversion but with our reactions to those events. Again, the angel is not the focal point of Alma’s conversion; Christ is. In this regard, Alma serves as a pattern for all truth seekers. He came to Christ through repentance, was born of the Spirit, consecrated his talents and energies to building the Church of God, openly and publicly stood as a witness of Christ, and chose to be an instrument in the hands of God. The following chart provides an overview, accentuating the theme that true conversion does not usually necessitate fantastic visions or remarkable visitations. Rather, the contrast enhances our understanding of the principle that coming to Christ with a willing heart and a determination to trust Him matters most.
A third major theme in the Book of Mormon is the importance of standing as a witness of God to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. This theme is introduced in the earliest scenes of the Book of Mormon when Lehi was commissioned to call the inhabitants of Jerusalem to repentance (see 1 Nephi 1:18–20). Indeed, Lehi’s son Jacob proclaimed that failing to magnify a calling as a teacher could result in the transference of sins from those who should have been taught to the errant teacher himself (or herself; see Jacob 1:19). Like Jacob, the four sons of Mosiah stand as sentinels of the power and influence that preaching the gospel may yield (see Alma 17–26). Indeed, Alma testified that “the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else” (Alma 31:5). The prophet Ether preached until he and Coriantumr stood alone as witnesses of the complete destruction of the once noble Jaredite nation (see Ether 15). Similarly, in the closing chapters of Nephite history, Mormon taught his people that if they would repent and turn to their God, they would be spared. Tragically, the Nephites ignored Mormon’s call to repentance and were visited with great destruction (see Mormon 3:2; 6:22). As these examples indicate, the importance of preaching the word of God is laced through the Book of Mormon from beginning to end.

### Enhancing Book of Mormon Themes through Contrasts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mosiah 27</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alma prior to Repentance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rejected Jesus in unbelief (8, 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Embraced wickedness and darkness (8, 29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Used language skills to flatter (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Led many people to iniquity (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hindered prosperity of the Church (9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Stole the hearts of the people (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Performed evil works in secrecy (10)</td>
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<td>8. Intended to destroy the Church (10-11)</td>
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</table>

**Shiblon and Corianton: Standing as a Witness of God by Preaching the Gospel of Christ**

A third major theme in the Book of Mormon is the importance of standing as a witness of God to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. This theme is introduced in the earliest scenes of the Book of Mormon when Lehi was commissioned to call the inhabitants of Jerusalem to repentance (see 1 Nephi 1:18–20). Indeed, Lehi’s son Jacob proclaimed that failing to magnify a calling as a teacher could result in the transference of sins from those who should have been taught to the errant teacher himself (or herself; see Jacob 1:19). Like Jacob, the four sons of Mosiah stand as sentinels of the power and influence that preaching the gospel may yield (see Alma 17–26). Indeed, Alma testified that “the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else” (Alma 31:5). The prophet Ether preached until he and Coriantumr stood alone as witnesses of the complete destruction of the once noble Jaredite nation (see Ether 15). Similarly, in the closing chapters of Nephite history, Mormon taught his people that if they would repent and turn to their God, they would be spared. Tragically, the Nephites ignored Mormon’s call to repentance and were visited with great destruction (see Mormon 3:2; 6:22). As these examples indicate, the importance of preaching the word of God is laced through the Book of Mormon from beginning to end.
Given the importance of this theme, we may examine with interest contrasts found in Alma 38–39. In Alma 38, Shiblon, a son of Alma, is identified as an excellent missionary who is striving to develop at least seven characteristics or actions of someone possessing great desires to preach the gospel. In Alma 39, we learn that Corianton, another of Alma’s sons, has abandoned his missionary calling to entertain the lusts of the flesh. In his character, at least seven traits or actions may be found that constitute the antithesis of effective missionary work.

Taken together, these chapters constitute a snapshot in the lives of Shiblon and Corianton, wherein they were called to preach among the Zoramites. From these chapters, we should not conclude that Shiblon is infallible or that Corianton is terminally corrupt. However, the fact that these two sons are placed side by side in the text is not accidental, leading the careful reader to search for insights into what the Lord expects from His missionaries in Alma’s day and in our own. Indeed, Alma seems to beckon latter-day readers to compare the two sons when he proclaimed to Corianton: “Have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God? Behold, has he not set a good example for thee?” (Alma 39:1).

Both Shiblon and Corianton are young men, and Alma’s individual discussions with them are intended to spur them on to righteousness throughout the rest of their lives (see Alma 38:2; 39:10). Although not perfect, Shiblon was steady, faithful, and diligent (see Alma 38:2–3); and in the face of opposition to his labors, he was patient, long-suffering, and worthy of the Lord’s companionship (see Alma 38:3–4). Shiblon had established himself as a missionary who took every opportunity to teach the word of God (see Alma 38:10). Shiblon was cautioned by his father to strive to be temperate (or moderate) in all things—to be bold but not overbearing—and to seek greater humility before the Lord, always guarding against propensities to be prideful (see Alma 38:10–12, 14). Alma further encouraged Shiblon to bridle all his passions, enabling him to focus all his energies on others and become a man who was filled with love (Alma 38:12). Even with this instruction, however, Alma makes it clear that Shiblon was convinced of the truthfulness of the gospel and was willing to suffer imprisonment and stoning for the word’s sake (Alma 38:3–4).

In stark contrast to Shiblon, Alma provides at least seven character traits or actions of Corianton that serve as a guide for determining pitfalls that every missionary should avoid. For example, instead of undying diligence, Corianton deserted his missionary labors, traveled to the borders of the lands of the Lamanites, and pursued the harlot Isabel with whom he committed immoral acts (see Alma 39:3–5). Also, although Shiblon exhibited
the traits of steadiness, faithfulness, and diligence, Corianton failed to give heed to Alma’s instruction and warnings and ignored the good example of his brother (see Alma 39:1–2). Although Shiblon was patient and long-suffering and enjoyed the companionship of the Lord (see Alma 38), Corianton boastfully relied on his own strength and wisdom without putting his trust in the Lord (see Alma 39:2). Additionally, Corianton not only forsook the ministry but also led people to do wickedly (see Alma 39:3, 13); he indulged in abominations (see Alma 39:3–5); he sought to hide his sins from God (see Alma 39:8); and he was wanton and materialistic (see Alma 39:9, 14). Corianton’s most glaring deficiency as a missionary may have been his insecure and unsteady understanding of the Atonement of Christ and its significance in his personal life and in the lives of those he taught (see Alma 39:15–16). In fact, Alma 40–42 presents Alma’s pointed efforts to clarify and magnify Christ’s Atonement in the mind of his errant son.

Because of the prominence of missionary work as a theme in the Book of Mormon, Alma’s interviews with Shiblon and Corianton are particularly instructive. Herein, Corianton contrasts with Shiblon. Although we do not delight in Corianton’s failures, they do serve to enhance our understanding of the fruits of anyone who chooses to trust in the arm of flesh (see 2 Nephi 28:31). Shiblon’s character, on the other hand, brings the pressing need for missionaries to strive genuinely to possess steadiness, patience, a lively testimony, temperance, humility, self-control, and love. Although neither son is perfect, the following chart accentuates the goodness of Shiblon at the time he served among the Zoramites. He stands as a model of what characteristics missionaries anciently and today should possess or should be striving to obtain.

| Alma 38-39 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Shiblon (Alma 38)** | **Corianton (Alma 39)** |
| 1. Steady, faithful, diligent (2-3) | 1. Failed to heed Alma’s words (2) |
| 2. Patient, long-suffering; the Lord was with him (3-4) | 2. Boasted in his own strength and wisdom (2) |
| 3. Teacher of the word of God (10) | 3. Forsook the ministry and led people to do wickedly (3, 11-13) |
| 4. Strove to be temperate (10) | 4. Indulged in abominations (3-5) |
| 5. Sought humility before the Lord (11) | 5. Sought to hide his sins from God (8) |
| 6. Strove to bridle passions (12) | 6. Wanton and materialistic (9, 14) |
| 7. Sought to be full of love (12) | 7. Unsure of the Atonement of Christ (15-16) |
4 Nephi: The Establishment and Collapse of Peace

The fourth major theme of the Book of Mormon that we will explore is the importance of establishing peace within our own hearts (what will be referred to as internal peace) and within the general society in which we work, worship, and live (referred to as external peace). Nephi explained that giving way to temptations from the adversary destroyed his peace (see 2 Nephi 4:27). Also, for some time prior to Korihor’s ministry as an antichrist, the people of Zarahemla had established continual peace through their humility, fasting, prayer, and obedience to the commandments (see Alma 30:2–3). Without question, Korihor was the tool in Satan’s hands to disrupt this peace. Furthermore, the so-called “war chapters” of the Book of Mormon report one instance after another of the establishment or collapse of peace. Mormon reports that all of Captain Moroni’s efforts were designed to foster peace in the nation, Church, home, and heart. Such conditions, he explained, made it possible to “live unto the Lord” (Alma 48:10). On the other hand, Amalickiah was bent on stirring up contention and strife to the point of hardening hearts and blinding minds in order to fulfill his fraudulent plans to destroy the peace of the Nephites and place them in bondage (see Alma 48:1–7).

Possibly, the best illustration of this theme in the Book of Mormon is found in 4 Nephi. Following the personal ministry of the Savior in the Americas, peace was established in the nation, in the Church, and in the hearts of the people. Interestingly, perhaps the best case study of the demise of internal and external peace is also found in 4 Nephi, a decline that transpired after two hundred years of peace, unity, and consecration.

The establishment and collapse of peace in 4 Nephi are accentuated through deliberate contrasts. An examination of the forty-nine verses that comprise 4 Nephi reveals at least ten clear points of contrast between the actions of the people of Nephi, who established and maintained peace, and the people of the fourth generation, who turned away from God and caused the collapse of continual peace. The first third of the book describes the people of Nephi who become converted to the Lord (see 4 Nephi 1:2) and experience no contentions among themselves (see 4 Nephi 1:2, 13, 15, 18). Also, they have sufficient for their needs because there are no rich or poor in their midst. Furthermore, the gifts of the Spirit are abundantly manifest in their lives (see 4 Nephi 1:3–5). During this time, there are no whoredoms committed, honesty prevails in all circumstances, and all cherish and have a deep respect for life. Finally, the people of Nephi enjoy singular happiness
(see 4 Nephi 1:16), the result of which is a spiritual understanding that they have been redeemed by Christ and are joint heirs with Him in the kingdom of the Father (see 4 Nephi 1:17).

Today, we take great hope in the fact that Nephi’s people persisted in harmony for some two hundred years. We are, however, sobered by the fact that this idyllic society collapsed in a very short period of time. Mormon’s documentation of its end is found primarily in the last two-thirds of 4 Nephi. Unfortunately, the ruin of this community began when a small part of the people rebelled, broke away, and disassociated themselves from the people of God. Where there was once unity and all were converted, there now appeared groups of dissidents who took upon themselves the names of Laman, Jacob, Joseph, and Zoram, becoming all manner of “ites” (see 4 Nephi 1:20, 35–36). Where once pride was virtually nonexistent, it became apparent by the wearing of costly apparel, jewels, and the “fine things of the world” (see 4 Nephi 1:24). At the height of their peace, all things were held in common among the people of God, which nullified the possibility of poverty. However, by the end of 4 Nephi, a group of people refused to live the law of consecration and, in its place, established a class structure wherein status was determined by a person’s personal wealth. The downward spiral continued, as many people denied the legitimacy of the true Church (see 4 Nephi 1:25–26) and persecuted those who chose to remain faithful (see 4 Nephi 1:34). Where once the people were righteous and would not allow whoredoms in their midst, they dwindled in unbelief, became hard-hearted, established many churches that were led by false prophets, and were swept away in iniquitous acts (see 4 Nephi 1:34). Significantly, Mormon explains that their rebellions were willfully carried out with a clear understanding of their consequences (see 4 Nephi 1:38). Furthermore, the ancestors of these people had maintained a deep respect for life, but the children of the rebels were taught to hate the people of God. Secret combinations were established and encouraged, allowing the robbers of Gadianton to spread throughout the land (see 4 Nephi 1:39–40, 42, 46). In the end, the more wicked part of the people increased in strength and became exceedingly more numerous than the believers in Christ (see 4 Nephi 1:40). Indeed, conditions became so desperate that the prophet Ammaron was constrained by the Holy Ghost to bury the sacred records in the hill Shim (see 4 Nephi 1:48; Mormon 1:3).

Mormon’s economy with words in the book of 4 Nephi are remarkable. He uses nineteen verses to describe a righteous community of Saints that persisted in peace for two centuries. Without question, this was the
golden age of all Book of Mormon peoples. Although we cannot be certain, it is reasonable to conclude that in a coming day, we will possess a fuller record of this significant era of Book of Mormon history. In the meantime, it is apparent that Mormon is very interested in helping latter-day readers come to an understanding of what qualities and characteristics serve to constitute conditions of peace internally and externally and what vices bring an end to such peace. The following chart reconstructs the contrasts that Mormon embedded in the text of 4 Nephi. Here we see that conversion, kindness, consecration, gifts of the Spirit, love, virtue, honesty, respect, joy, and a perfect brightness of hope in Christ’s redemption are salient elements of a peaceful society. At the same time, we learn that pride, class structure based on temporal possessions, unbelief, rebellion, hatred, secrecy, and corruption are elements that bring the smooth-running wheels of a peaceful society to a grinding halt. Because Mormon utilizes contrasts in 4 Nephi, our understanding of the significance, goodness, and desirability of internal and external peace in our lives is enhanced. In this regard, 4 Nephi serves as another compelling example of the effectiveness of contrasts that accentuate the importance of a major theme in the Book of Mormon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishing Internal/External Peace</th>
<th>The Collapse of Internal/External Peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All converted to the Lord (2)</td>
<td>1. Small part of people revolt (20, 35–36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No contentions among them (2)</td>
<td>2. Some lifted up in pride (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No rich or poor: consecration (3)</td>
<td>3. Consecration ends; class structure set up (25–26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gifts of the Spirit in abundance (3–5)</td>
<td>4. They deny the true Church (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Love of God in hearts of people (15)</td>
<td>5. They persecute the true Church of Christ (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No whoredoms among the people (16)</td>
<td>6. They dwindle in unbelief and become wicked (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Honest dealings prevail (16)</td>
<td>7. They willfully rebel (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Deep respect for life (16)</td>
<td>8. Children taught to hate the people of God (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A happier people was never created by God (16)</td>
<td>9. Secret oaths and combinations established firmly among the people (40, 42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Children of Christ, heirs of the kingdom of God (17)</td>
<td>10. The robbers of Gadianton spread over the land, leaving no righteous among them (46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

From the text, we can assuredly conclude that the authors of the Book of Mormon employed contrasts to teach and highlight important principles of the gospel. In this article, we have examined four major themes of the Book of Mormon in which contrasts were used to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the principles and doctrines found therein. From these, we have come to a clearer understanding of the true nature of discipleship, the essential role that repentance and trust in the Atonement play in our coming to Christ, the foundational characteristics of an effective missionary, and the qualities resident in the heart of one who seeks to enjoy internal and external peace in this life. Each of these contrasts could be overlooked easily if a reader experiences only a superficial reading of the text. In this light, it is hoped that examination of these contrasts may result in a more careful study of the Book of Mormon by its readers and improved abilities on their part to identify, analyze, apply, and present gospel principles that are couched in the scriptures.

Notes


3. Concerning the care taken by Book of Mormon authors and editors, President Ezra Taft Benson explained: “Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us. . . . If they saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, ‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?’” (“The Keystone of Our Religion,”
Ensign, January 1992, 5).


5. Although I suggest eight points of comparison, this outcome is by no means comprehensive. Indeed, a different reading may yield six or ten points of comparison between Nephi and Laman and Lemuel. Furthermore, I am not striving to attain an exact “side-by-side” comparison of each point. Another reader may identify eight characteristics of Laman’s and Lemuel’s faithlessness and ten characteristics of Nephi’s discipleship. Simply put, this is a somewhat subjective undertaking. Ultimately, the fact that the text of the Book of Mormon beckons the reader to examine the comparison is the most important point. These contrasts could be “charted” in many ways, and the reader is at liberty to employ a great deal of variety in the endeavor. This is the case with the other three themes that are illustrated through contrasts in this article. My charting of the contrasts is intended to aid the reader but is not intended to suggest comprehensiveness.


9. Indeed, the text clearly shows that Shiblon remains faithful throughout his life and that Corianton repents, returns to his ministry, and endures to the end in righteousness (see Alma 43:1–2; 49:30; 63:1, 10–11).

10. See Richard O. Cowan, “Shiblon,” in Largay, Book of Mormon Reference Companion, 721. The author also credits Jared M. Halverson for providing valuable insights regarding the character and personality of Shiblon.
Appendix: Additional Contrasts in the Book of Mormon

Jacob and Sherem

Sherem is the first “anti-Christ” depicted in the Book of Mormon. Jacob is the first prophet to face such an opponent of the Church. Placed side by side, the differences between Sherem and the Lord’s prophet are telling.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Jacob (Jacob 7)</th>
<th>Sherem (Jacob 7)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Beheld angels and heard voice of the Lord (5)</td>
<td>1. Deceived by the devil (18)</td>
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<td>2. Received many revelations from God (5)</td>
<td>2. Revelations are not possible (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Spiritually grounded (5, 8, 12)</td>
<td>3. Intellectually learned, spiritually weak (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Unshakable (5)</td>
<td>4. Fearful (19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Preached Christ (6)</td>
<td>5. Denied Christ (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Unwilling to tempt God (14)</td>
<td>6. Sign seeker (13)</td>
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Zarahemla, Gideon, and Ammonihah

In the initial chapters of the book of Alma, Alma preaches in Zarahemla, Gideon, and Ammonihah. Alma provides a description of the people living in these cities. Interestingly, in Zarahemla Alma preached about the importance of maintaining or reclaiming the basic tenets of testimony. In Gideon Alma taught deep doctrinal truths about the Atonement of Jesus Christ. In Ammonihah Alma preached impending doom and destruction if the people of the city failed to repent. When Alma’s description of these cities is placed side by side, it becomes evident that he determined what to teach by considering the spiritual condition of his audience. In this regard, Zarahemla and Ammonihah are contrasts to Gideon whose inhabitants serve as a model for individuals, families, and congregations who desire to be taught deep spiritual truths by God’s prophets.
Amalickiah and Captain Moroni

Leadership, and the qualities of righteous leaders, constitutes a significant theme in the Book of Mormon. This can be easily seen in the contrasts between Amalickiah and Captain Moroni in the text.2

<table>
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<th>Alma 5, 7, 8</th>
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<td><strong>Zarahemla (Alma 5)</strong></td>
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<td>1. Iniquitous (37)</td>
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<td>2. Puffed up (37)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Alma 47-48</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Amalickiah (Alma 47-48)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Was a subtle man to do evil (Alma 47:4)</td>
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<td>5. Hardened hearts (Alma 48:3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Promoted wicked people (Alma 48:5)</td>
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Notes

1. Alma also preached and had success in Melek. However, no details are provided beyond the fact that many people in and around Melek flocked to Alma, were taught by him, and were baptized (see Alma 8:4–5).

2. This contrast is the subject of a memorable address delivered by Hugh Nibley at the commencement services held at Brigham Young University on August 19, 1983 (see Hugh Nibley, “Leadership versus Management,” *BYU Today*, February 1984, 17–19, 45–46).
Modern prophets have encouraged religious educators to do more to ensure that truth is locked into the hearts of the youth of the Church. When the truth goes down deeply into their hearts, they will then live the gospel and become fully converted. For this conversion process to take place, youth must be taught in such a way that they feel motivated to allow the Holy Ghost to make a mighty change within them. Knowing the gospel in their heads is insufficient—it must go down into their hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Throughout the Book of Mormon, we read of many holy men who taught the word of God in just that way. The truth they taught pierced and penetrated those who heard and hearkened in such a way that caused real change. One of the reasons these teachers were so effective is that they taught using the scriptures and the teachings of their living prophets. Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke of additional power that flows through teachers who use the scriptures together with the words of prophets: “Holy scripture and the words of living prophets occupy a privileged position; they are the key to teaching by the Spirit.”

This is an oft-repeated theme in the Book of Mormon. We read again and again of a conversion process that began as people heard and then hearkened to the words of God spoken by prophets and other holy men. We read of how these teachers taught using both the scriptures and the teachings of the living prophets. We read of how these people were changed by the Holy Ghost and how they were blessed by the Lord.
The purpose of this article is to look at some of these accounts and then suggest some ways that religious educators can more effectively incorporate the teachings of the living prophets into their teaching.

**King Benjamin and His Priests**

Mormon notes that King Benjamin, “with the assistance of the holy prophets who were among his people,” set out to establish peace in the land. “For behold, king Benjamin was a holy man, and he did reign over his people in righteousness; and there were many holy men in the land and they did speak the word of God with power and with authority. . . . Wherefore, with the help of these, king Benjamin by laboring with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul, and also the prophets, did once more establish peace in the land” (Words of Mormon 1:16–18; emphasis added).

Many people came to hear King Benjamin’s final discourse. The impact on those who heard and hearkened to the words of this holy man was profound. They believed, knew, had a mighty change wrought in them, and had no more disposition to do evil but to do good continually. They had great views, had great faith, rejoiced with great joy, and were willing to enter into a covenant to do God’s will to be obedient “all the remainder of our days” (see Mosiah 5:2–5).

King Benjamin gave the people a name to retain written always in their hearts. And then he “appointed priests to teach the people” (Mosiah 6:3). After Benjamin had spoken, “he caused that the words which he spake should be written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice, that they might also receive his words” (Mosiah 2:8). These written words were undoubtedly used by the priests so the people “might hear and know the commandments of God, and [be stirred] up in remembrance of the oath which they had made” (Mosiah 6:3).

**Alma**

The prophet Abinadi came forth among the people of Noah and began to preach. He was imprisoned, tried unjustly, and killed. Alma heard and hearkened to the words of this prophet. He “repented of his sins . . . and went about privately among the people, and began to teach the words of Abinadi” (Mosiah 18:1; emphasis added). A total of 204 other souls heard and hearkened to Alma, were baptized, and “were called the church of God” (Mosiah 18:17).
Then, Alma “ordained priests; even one priest to every fifty of their number did he ordain to preach unto them, and to teach them concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And he commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets” (Mosiah 18:18–19; emphasis added).

Look at the wonderful blessings poured out upon the people as they heard and hearkened to these priests who taught the words of Alma and Abinadi. In the churches that were established, “every priest preach[ed] the word according as it was delivered to him by the mouth of Alma. . . . Whosoever were desirous to take upon them the name of Christ, or of God, they did join the churches of God; and they were called the people of God. And the Lord did pour out his Spirit upon them, and they were blessed, and prospered in the land” (Mosiah 25:21, 23–24; emphasis added).

In response to Alma’s prayer in Mosiah 26, the Lord complimented him for teaching the words of the prophet Abinadi: “Blessed art thou, Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi. And blessed are [thy people] because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them” (Mosiah 26:15–16; emphasis added).

Alma chose to teach the words of Abinadi. These words were also taught by the priests who served with him. By so doing, Alma strengthened his own teaching and the teaching of his priests. Such powerful teaching had a dramatic impact on those they taught.

Later, in Alma the Younger’s discourse to the people in Zarahemla (Alma 5), he referred to his father’s experience with Abinadi. Note the results that he reported about those who heard and hearkened:

Behold, I can tell you—did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?

And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart. Behold I say unto you that this is all true.

And behold, he preached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God. And behold, they were faithful until the end; therefore they were saved. (Alma 5:11–13; emphasis added)
The Sons of Mosiah

The experiences of Ammon with Lamoni demonstrate the same theme. Ammon taught Lamoni and “rehearsed and laid before him the records and the holy scriptures of the people, which had been spoken by the prophets” (Alma 18:36; emphasis added).

Through the teaching of Ammon, Lamoni and his wife were converted unto the Lord. When they were raised from the ground and stood upon their feet, Lamoni began to teach his people. What did he teach them? Lamoni, “seeing the contention among his people, went forth and began to rebuke them, and to teach them the words which he had heard from the mouth of Ammon.” And the result?

“And as many as heard his words believed, and were converted unto the Lord. . . . And they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil. . . . And they became a righteous people, and they did establish a church among them. And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them” (Alma 19:31, 33, 35–36; emphasis added).

Notice how Mormon defined the success of Mosiah’s sons: “And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord, . . . and they were taught the records and prophecies which were handed down even to the present time. And . . . as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren . . . were converted unto the Lord, [and] never did fall away. For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren” (Alma 23:5–7; emphasis added).

These people had been taught the “records” and the “prophecies which were handed down even to the present time.” That mixture of teaching that included records and prophecies was a key piece of their teachings. Because the Spirit of the Lord carries truths taught from the scriptures and the prophets to the hearts of the children of men (see 2 Nephi 33:1), this teaching fostered deep conversion.

Samuel the Lamanite

In the account of Samuel the Lamanite, Mormon included what Samuel spoke about the people of Ammon. As Samuel taught, he listed some of the results of their choices to hear and hearken. Note how closely the words here both mirror and expand upon the words in Alma 23:
And I would that ye should behold that the more part of them are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments.

They are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth; therefore there are many who do add to their numbers daily.

And behold, . . . as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them—

Therefore, as many as have come to this . . . are firm and steadfast in the faith. . . .

They fear to sin. . . .

And now, because of their steadfastness [and] their firmness when they are once enlightened, behold, the Lord shall bless them. (Helaman 15:5–10; emphasis added)

**Jesus Christ**

Sorrowing at the plight of his people who would be killed if Samuel’s signs were not seen, the prophet Nephi called on the Lord and was told to be of good cheer. Then, among all the things that He could have said to him, the Lord chose to tell Nephi that the reason He was coming to the world was “to show . . . that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets” (3 Nephi 1:13; emphasis added).

Mormon described the people of the Nephites. There was not one among them who “did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken. . . . And they knew that it must be expedient that Christ had come, because of the many signs which had been given, according to the words of the prophets” (3 Nephi 5:1–2; emphasis added). Because of this, they forsook their sins and served God with all diligence (see v. 3).

These people listened to the teachings of Nephi and “began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel” (3 Nephi 8:3). They hearkened to the words of their living prophets. At the death of Jesus, great destruction occurred for three days, and many perished. Mormon emphasized who was spared and why: “And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not. . . . And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scrip-
tures, let him search them, and see and behold if . . . all these things are not *unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets*” (3 Nephi 10:12, 14; emphasis added).

After being introduced by the Father, Jesus descended from heaven. The first thing Mormon tells us that Jesus said to the people in the New World was, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world” (3 Nephi 11:10; emphasis added). Before mentioning that He was the light of the world, before telling them that He had taken upon Himself the sins of the world, and before inviting the people to come forth and thrust their hands into His side and feel the prints of the nails in His hands and feet, He identified Himself as He of whom the prophets had testified! The Savior values the words of His prophets!

The first verse of the next chapter helps us to understand a bit more of how Jesus feels about His prophets: “(Now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen” (3 Nephi 12:1; emphasis added).

Near the end of the book of 3 Nephi, Mormon admonished his readers again to hear and hearken to God’s prophets: “And wo be unto him that will not hearken unto the words of Jesus, and also to them whom he hath chosen and sent among them; for whoso receiveth not the words of Jesus and the words of those whom he hath sent receiveth not him; and therefore he will not receive them at the last day” (3 Nephi 28:34; emphasis added).

Perhaps it is for this reason that Moroni so emphatically commended us “to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever” (Ether 12:41; emphasis added).

**Therefore What?**

An extra measure of spiritual power is given to teachers who teach the scriptures together with the words of modern prophets. This theme is visited again and again throughout the Book of Mormon. People who learned from holy men and prophets who taught the scriptures together with the words of the living prophets were deeply converted. What more can modern religious educators do to put this pattern into action? How might we more effectively utilize the words of modern prophets to supplement and complement the teachings of the scriptures?
Incorporating the Words of Prophets

As modern gospel teachers, we should listen very intently to the words of the prophets and holy men in our day—probably much more intently than we often tend to do. We could study more carefully and prayerfully their words. We could give additional attention to those words that have been spoken directly to CES. We could more frequently, effectively, and systematically study and discuss their teachings with our colleagues. We could ask and attempt to answer, “How do these modern teachings apply in my particular assignment?” We could choose to hear and hearken more fully to their words in our own lives and in our teaching.

We could do more than just quote the Brethren. We could do more than simply copying a statement onto the board or onto a handout to substantiate or emphasize a particular doctrinal or historical point. Speaking about the scriptures, Elder Maxwell said, “Only by searching the scriptures, not using them occasionally as quote books, can we begin to understand the implications as well as the declarations of the gospel.” The same principle applies to the words of the prophets. What is being suggested here is that gospel teachers see, understand, and apply to their own teaching the “implications as well as the declarations” of what the prophets teach.

President James E. Faust taught that we should give priority to the words of living prophets: “Since revelations continue to come to this divine institution all of the time, I . . . suggest that some priority should be given to the declarations of the modern prophets as against those received many, many centuries ago and that were intended for a different people at a different time. For instance, I feel that the counsel of our current prophet should receive far greater attention than the pronouncements of Ezekiel.”

We could ask the Lord to help us as we listen to and study these modern teachings. We could plead with Him to bless us with additional insight into the scriptures because we have invested ourselves in the words of His modern servants. We could more carefully prepare lessons that purposefully point our students to the living prophets, seers, and revelators. As we pray for our students and also pray about what and how we will teach, we could remember this statement from Elder Henry B. Eyring:

“If I’d like to have a student be able to withstand persecution, I need to tune his ears to the words of living prophets. . . . Now I bear you my testimony that your young people can be deeply affected by the way

With the Assistance of the Holy Prophets”
you tell them what prophets are like. If, when you read the words of prophets, and if, when you describe your experiences with the words of prophets, you tell them the joy you felt and the joy you feel from knowing that God speaks to you by living prophets, I bear you my testimony that you will be building power in them to resist temptation and to resist persecution.”

We could encourage students to develop a respect for, a love for, and a devotion to the words of our living prophets by providing them with opportunities to use the teachings of the prophets as they explain, share, and testify to one other. We could encourage each student to have his or her own copy of the conference edition of the 

Ensign or Liahona. In addition to urging our students to develop a daily habit of scripture study, we could encourage them to develop a habit of studying the words of the living prophets. As they develop such habits, we could encourage them to pray for help in seeing the connections between the scriptures and modern prophetic teaching. We could encourage them to cross-reference and mark the addresses of the prophets of our day. We could encourage them to copy the words of the Brethren into their scriptures. We could have copies of the most recent conference edition of the Church magazines for frequent use in our classes. We could teach our students to use the Topical Index in the conference editions and then give them opportunity to do so. In addition to having students share thoughts, scriptures, and testimony in devotionals, we could invite them to include a recent quote from general conference. We could encourage students to bear their testimonies of gospel truths they have studied from the words of the prophets. We could encourage them to become as familiar with the words of the modern prophets as they are becoming with the scriptures. What might happen in the lives of our students if they read and marked and used the conference editions like they read, mark, and use their scriptures?

President Harold B. Lee said, “If you want to know what the Lord would have the Saints know and to have his guidance and direction for the next six months, get a copy of the proceedings of this conference, and you will have the latest word of the Lord as far as the Saints are concerned.”

President Ezra Taft Benson encouraged us to study more thoroughly and to use the words of the prophets from the most recent general conference: “For the next six months, your conference edition of the Ensign should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently. As my dear friend and brother Harold B. Lee said, we
should let these conference addresses ‘be the guide to [our] walk and talk during the next six months. These are the important matters the Lord sees fit to reveal to this people in this day.’”6

President Benson taught about the most important prophet: “God’s revelation to Adam did not instruct Noah how to build the Ark. Noah needed his own revelation. Therefore the most important prophet so far as you and I are concerned is the one living in our day and age to whom the Lord is currently revealing His will for us. Therefore the most important reading we can do is any of the words of the prophet contained each month in our Church Magazines. Our instructions about what we should do for each six months are found in the General Conference addresses which are printed in the Church magazine.”7

Relative to the teachings in general conference, President Howard W. Hunter taught that “our modern prophets have encouraged us to make the reading of the conference editions of our Church magazines an important and regular part of our personal study. Thus general conference becomes, in a sense, a supplement to or an extension of the Doctrine and Covenants.”8

As teachers, we could learn how to utilize fully the resources available at www.lds.org. We could teach our students how to use this and other resources the Lord has blessed us with. Three of these are mentioned here. First is http://scriptures.byu.edu. Currently, this index links from the scriptures to the general conference talks that cite those scriptures between 1942 and the present. Citations can be sorted by scripture, by speaker, or by date. Second is the “Find a Talk” section of www.byubroadcasting.org. “BYU Broadcasting’s exclusive speeches database features complete information on all the talks, speeches, addresses, devotionals and other presentations broadcast on all BYU Broadcasting’s channels. Results include links to the audio or video archives, transcript information, purchasing information, and future broadcast times (when available).”9 This database is searchable by speaker, title, event, keyword, and date. Most general conference addresses are also included. Students who learn how to use these and other resources will be empowered to use the words of prophets and holy men in their talks and lessons as they teach both in and out of our classes. Third, devotional addresses given at the various campuses of BYU and LDS Business College are catalogueed for our use (www.byu.edu, www.byui.edu, www.byuh.edu, and www.ldsb.edu. CES firesides are also available at www.ldsces.org/cesfiresides.asp

When we issue challenges to our students, we could challenge them to live up to the words of the prophets. We could promise them
the same blessings that came to the people in the Book of Mormon who heard and hearkened to those words.

**Conclusion**

What a privilege we enjoy of living in a day when the words of holy men are so readily available to teachers and to students! Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on the thrill we should feel to have living prophets: “We cannot explain the wonder and the marvel of living in a day when God has sent a revealer to speak His word to the whole world, and when He sent supplemental prophets to echo the message and proclaim the truth and get as much into the hearts of men as they are able to receive.”

Mormon included in his abridgment of the Book of Mormon story after story after story of people whose teachers and leaders used the scriptures and the words of prophets in their teaching. They chronicled how the lives of these people changed, how they were converted unto the Lord, and how they came unto Christ and thus had peace established. As these people “were taught the records and the prophecies which were handed down even to the present time, . . . [they] were brought to the knowledge of the truth . . . and were converted unto the Lord [and] never did fall away. For they became a righteous people” (Alma 23:5–7; emphasis added). Further, “They were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27).

Early in this dispensation, the Lord admonished the elders in Kirtland: “And let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith. . . . Let them labor with their families, declaring none other things than the prophets and apostles, that which they have seen and heard and most assuredly believe, that the prophecies may be fulfilled” (D&C 52:9, 36).

Modern prophets have encouraged religious educators to do more, to do better, and to improve—all to the end that the youth of the Church become more deeply converted and come unto Christ. The results chronicled in the lives of people in the Book of Mormon give us motivation to improve. As religious educators become more effective in using the scriptures together with the words of the prophets, we will more fully tap into what Elder Maxwell called “the key to teaching by the Spirit.” We will then provide our students with an additional measure of power that will yield the blessings of deep conversion in their lives.
Notes


President Wilford Woodruff related a story that taught this same principle: “I will refer to a certain meeting I attended in the town of Kirtland in my early days. . . . Some remarks were made . . . with regard to the living oracles and with regard to the written word of God. . . . A leading man in the church . . . talked upon the subject, and said: ‘You have got the word of God before you here in the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants; you have the written word of God, and you who give revelations should give revelations according to those books, as what is written in those books is the word of God. We should confine ourselves to them.’ When he concluded, Brother Joseph turned to Brother Brigham Young and said, ‘Brother Brigham I want you to go to the podium and tell us your views with regard to the living oracles and the written word of God.’ Brother Brigham took the stand, and he took the Bible, and laid it down; he took the Book of Mormon, and laid it down; and he took the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and laid it down before him, and he said: ‘There is the written word of God to us, concerning the work of God from the beginning of the world, almost, to our day. And now,’ said he, ‘when compared with the living oracles those books are nothing to me; those books do not convey the word of God direct to us now, as do the words of a Prophet or a man bearing the Holy Priesthood in our day and generation. I would rather have the living oracles than all the writing in the books.’ That was the course he pursued. When he was through, Brother Joseph said to the congregation; ‘Brother Brigham has told you the word of the Lord, and he has told you the truth’” (in Conference Report, October 1897, 22–23; emphasis added).


8. Howard W. Hunter, “The Heavens Are Open” satellite broadcast, November 13, 1988, from Come unto Me, Church videocassette, 1988)


10. Bruce R. McConkie, “‘This Generation Shall Have My Word through You,’” in Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants (Provo and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2004), 46; emphasis added.
Jesus has power to redeem us, and all who are redeemed are called His sons and daughters.

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Adoption and Atonement: Becoming Sons and Daughters of Christ

Brian K. Ray

Brian K. Ray is a seminary instructor in Mesa, Arizona.

As my wife and I walked out of a Russian courtroom one December morning, our hearts were filled to overflowing. The judge had just finalized the adoption of our two baby boys, and we headed out into the winter cold to pick them up from the orphanages where they were located. The diligent prayers and the tireless efforts of many months had finally come to fruition. We thanked our Heavenly Father that the miracle of adoption had been realized in our lives, that by that process these two beautiful baby boys were now legally ours, and that shortly thereafter, through the authority of the sealing keys of the priesthood, they would be ours forever in righteousness. That experience has caused us to reflect much on the process of adoption whereby we can be adopted into the family of Jesus Christ, becoming His sons and daughters and qualifying for eternal life.

The Atonement and Adoption

Jesus Christ was foreordained in premortal life to fulfill the role of Redeemer and Savior in our Father’s plan of happiness. He achieved Godhood there (see John 1:1; Hebrews 1:8–9). The scriptures describe His foreordination in terms of being prepared (see Mosiah 4:6–7; 18:13; Moses 5:57). Jesus was prepared so that He might be able to work out the infinite Atonement for all mankind, and certainly He was successful in doing so. Elder Neal A. Maxwell confirms the reality of the Atonement and testifies of the inevitable success of God’s plans: “Because the centerpiece of the Atonement is already in place,
we know that everything else in God’s plan will likewise finally succeed. God is surely able to do His own work! (See 2 Nephi 27:20–21.) In His plans for the human family, long ago God made ample provision for all mortal mistakes. His purposes will all triumph and without abrogating man’s moral agency.”

Having accomplished the Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ had the title of Father, specifically the “Father of our salvation,” bestowed upon Him by God the Father. In a doctrinal exposition by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as referenced by Elder James E. Talmage in Articles of Faith, the Brethren explained that in this sense, the title of Father “has reference to the relationship between Him and those who accept His Gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life” and “that by obedience to the Gospel men may become sons of God, both as sons of Jesus Christ, and, through Him, as sons of His Father.”

To the brother of Jared, Jesus explained how He is both the Father and the Son, as follows: “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters” (Ether 3:14). By virtue of His Atonement, the Savior has the power and the authority to redeem mankind, and those who are redeemed are referred to as His sons and daughters. We are adopted into His family and become His.

The Apostle Paul understood the doctrine of divine adoption (see Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:5). Paul taught the Galatian Saints:

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:3–7)
Understanding the term *adoption* helps in our comprehending, at least in some small way, the Atonement of Christ and His attendant grace and mercy. Adoption means literally to “choose for oneself.” Jesus Christ chooses for Himself those who will be adopted by Him and become joint-heirs with Him. Although His love for all mankind is limitless, not all will choose to satisfy the requirements for divine adoption; an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven is conditional on spiritual prerequisites. This point of doctrine was made clear to the Prophet Joseph Smith when the Lord explained to him that because of personal unworthiness, “many are called, but few are chosen” (D&C 121:40; see also vv. 34–46).

Abinadi also understood this doctrine and strove to teach it to King Noah and his high priests. Subsequent to quoting Isaiah’s masterful discourse on the Savior’s Atonement, Abinadi explained the Lord’s roles as Father and Son: “I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son” (Mosiah 15:1–3).

Abinadi then pointed out Isaiah’s prophecy that “when [Jesus’s] soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed,” which he followed with a probing question: “And who shall be his seed?” (Mosiah 15:10). In other words, whom will the Savior adopt—who will become His spiritual sons and daughters through the power of His atonement? Abinadi outlines the requirements:

Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?” (Mosiah 15:11–12; emphasis added)

The Prophet Joseph Smith referred to these requirements as the “articles of adoption.”
Covenants and Adoption

Clearly, this process of adoption requires great effort on the part of the adoptee. We must remember, however, that the effort on the part of the adoptee is infinitesimally small in comparison to that of the Adopter. In fact, the Savior, by virtue of His Atonement, showers grace upon those who seek Him, enabling them in their efforts (see Bible Dictionary, “Grace,” 697). He invites all to come unto Him that we might be adopted by Him. This process begins with and is contingent upon our making covenants. Paul referenced the connection between adoption and covenants when he explained that members of the house of Israel are those “to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises” (Romans 9:4; emphasis added).

Changes occur as the prospective adoptee enters into covenants and abides by them. King Benjamin rejoiced “with exceedingly great joy” (Mosiah 5:4) as he saw the changes wrought in his people through the covenants they had made. The prophet-king explained that two primary changes happened as they, through covenant, had been “spiritually begotten,” “born of him and . . . become his sons and his daughters” (v. 7). First, their hearts had been “changed through faith on his name” (v. 7). This change was obvious to Benjamin’s people, as they exclaimed that the Spirit had “wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (v. 2).

The second covenantal change was the name by which they should be known. Benjamin taught his people, “There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives” (v. 8). Understanding what it means to take upon oneself the name of Christ aids in our comprehension of and efforts toward adoption into the family of Christ.

An experience of the prophet Moses illuminates this doctrine. On one of the occasions when “the Lord spake unto Moses face to face” (Exodus 33:11), Israel’s prophet requested that the Lord might show unto him the Lord’s way so that he might know the Lord. Jehovah commanded Moses to go to Mount Sinai the next morning where the Lord promised to “proclaim the name of the Lord before [Moses]” (v. 19). The next morning, as Moses waited on the Mount, “the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord” (Exodus 34:5). What the Lord said is enlighten-
ing: “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy . . . , forgiving iniquity” (vv. 6–7). By answering with a list of His attributes rather than with a proper name, the Lord tells us something of what it means to take upon ourselves His name. Additionally, He teaches us that to know His way, we must know His name and that to know His name is to know about His attributes and characteristics and about His redemptive role in our Heavenly Father’s plan. Those who covenant with the Lord to take upon themselves His name are essentially covenanting to take upon themselves the attributes He possesses in perfection. We promise to fulfill the commandment to “be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48).

The changes in a person who enters into covenants with God are not limited to the aforementioned two, however. The change in a person who draws near to the Redeemer through covenant is so significant that He referred to it as being “born again” (John 3:3). When Alma the Younger awakened from his coma-like experience, one of the very first things he related to the people was the Lord’s own words on the matter: “And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:25–26).

Again, King Benjamin explained that this drastic change whereby we “[put] off the natural man” is possible only “through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19). To become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (v. 19), and thereby qualify for adoption, requires the help of the Adopter. And not only does He have the power to so do but also He is the perfect Exemplar in that “the will of the Son [was] swallowed up in the will of the Father” (Mosiah 15:7).

The Prophet Joseph Smith gives further light on this process: “These teachings of the Saviour most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation, and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them—that he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings; and for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed; and on this hinge turns the door of salvation.”
Enduring in Righteousness and Adoption

While the making of covenants is critical to our being adopted into the family of Christ, it is certainly not the end of the adoption process. King Benjamin acknowledged that transgression would cause the name of Christ to be “blotted out of your hearts” (Mosiah 5:11). Therefore, enduring in righteousness is requisite for receiving the blessings promised to heirs of the kingdom of heaven. The First Presidency correlate obedience and exaltation as follows: “Those who have been born unto God through obedience to the Gospel may by valiant devotion to righteousness obtain exaltation and even reach the status of godhood. . . . Yet, though they be gods they are still subject to Jesus Christ as their Father in this exalted relationship.”

Moroni notes one essential requirement needed by those who will be adopted: “And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God” (Moroni 7:26). As people cultivate faith, they are enabled and strengthened as they strive to develop other Christlike attributes.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught about the virtues that are “part of the divine nature, or the Savior’s character.” He says, “The first characteristic, to which all the others are added, is faith. Faith is the foundation upon which a godlike character is built. It is a prerequisite for all other virtues.”

In the postcrucifixion darkness, Jesus taught the Nephites of another requirement to being adopted by Him. He said, “And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh” (3 Nephi 9:17; emphasis added). The question then becomes, How do we receive Him? A number of ways are outlined in scripture. On the same occasion, Jesus commented that “whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved” (v. 22; see also Mosiah 3:19). On this and other occasions, the Lord makes clear the fact that to the degree we receive Him, we are received of Him.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord explained that to receive the gospel is to receive Him and that “all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom” (D&C 25:1). Additionally, the Savior expounded, “Whosoever receiveth my word receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth those, the First Presidency,
whom I have sent, whom I have made counselors for my name’s sake unto you” (D&C 112:20). Plainly, the Lord expects those who would be adopted by and become joint-heirs with Him to follow Him—to follow Him by living His gospel and hearkening unto the words of His duly authorized representatives, especially the prophets (see Mosiah 15:11; D&C 84:88–89).

The Apostle Paul taught the Corinthian Saints that another requirement for their adoption into the family of Christ was contingent upon their cleanliness and avoidance of sin. He remarked:

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:16–18)

By enduring in righteousness through faith and receiving Him and avoiding sin, we seek to end this process of adoption that we began in the waters of baptism. The First Presidency’s exposition on the Fatherhood of Jesus Christ emphasizes the need for continued faithfulness subsequent to the making of covenants: “Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the laws and ordinances of the Gospel; and all who are thus saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive sense.”

Conclusion

What a blessing is ours to know that Jesus Christ has descended below all things and worked out the infinite Atonement and that, by virtue of that sublime act, Jesus will adopt as His sons and daughters those who are faithful in mortality. The adopted ones will be those who, having made and kept covenants in faith and obedience over a lifetime, can answer affirmatively Alma’s probing questions: “And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Alma 5:14). These are they who have been sealed His (see Mosiah 5:15) and who qualify for an inheritance, even a joint-inheritance with Jesus Christ in the celestial kingdom. The First Presidency again testifies of Christ’s role as the father of our salvation: “If it be proper to speak of those who accept and abide
in the Gospel as Christ’s sons and daughters—and upon this matter the scriptures are explicit and cannot be gainsaid nor denied—it is consistently proper to speak of Jesus Christ as the Father of the righteous, they having become His children and He having been made their Father through the second birth—the baptismal regeneration.”

Paul’s words cause the soul to hope and to rejoice at the prospects of adoption by the Atonement: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:14–17).

Notes

6. Talmage, Articles of Faith, 470.
8. Talmage, Articles of Faith, 468.
“We Believe in Being Honest”: Using Copyrighted Material in Teaching

Roger K. Petersen and R. Devan Jensen

Roger K. Petersen is manager of the Intellectual Property Office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
R. Devan Jensen is executive editor at the Religious Studies Center, BYU.

The Religious Educator held the following interview to help teachers and other Church members avoid common mistakes while using copyrighted material.

RE: Please tell us about what you do.

Petersen: I am manager of the Intellectual Property Office at the Church Office Building. That name is sometimes confusing. When people first hear it, they think, Wow! Intellectual Property. Actually it is very simple. Church intellectual property consists of words and ideas we want to protect. We do it with copyrights, patents, trademarks, trade names, and service marks. We also do it by declaring certain materials as “private and confidential.”

RE: What is Intellectual Reserve, Inc.?

Petersen: To assist with its intellectual property work, the Church has established a corporation called Intellectual Reserve, Inc. (IRI). Most large companies around the world have similar corporations with which they protect their own intellectual property.

For an example of how this works, if a person goes to the Church Archives to view a document, that document may actually belong to the Corporation of the Presiding Bishopric. But the rights to use the words on the paper belong to IRI. This distinction is basically to protect the Church, and it creates an entity with specific responsibility to protect against misuse.
RE: For our teachers’ benefit, will you explain what a copyright is?

Petersen: A copyright simply stipulates into law that a person or organization that places a piece of writing or artistic creation into a tangible form has rights to determine how that creation is used. These rights do not have to be registered, although it is best if they are. Any person or organization may register a copyright with the U.S. Library of Congress.

A copyright also means that reproduction rights to a writing or artistic creation are considered property. These rights can be marketed; they can be transferred; they can be inherited. These rights are property.

The Church has many different artists who do work for its organizations. Literally, it has hundreds. There are also many volunteers. Usually, we try to fix the rights to copy these creations via contract or agreement. Always it is certified and attested. A Church employee must sign over to the Church his or her copyrights to writings and other creations made while at the job site. Other artists from whom we purchase creations will often assign the copyrights over to the Church. Some do not, however, because they often wish to sell prints of their
creations, meanwhile allowing the Church simultaneously to use them in whatever way the Church wishes.

As the contracts are entered into, the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) assigns a code to each contract and work of art. These codes are a quick way to identify exact terms of most contracts. Finally, before a Church designer or producer is able to use these works of art or writing in a Church publication, he or she must report that code to the IPO; thereby, we can specify what rights the Church has to use the work, and we can ensure that the Church does not infringe against any individual’s or organization’s intellectual property rights.

**RE:** Must a copyright be registered?

**Petersen:** Whenever the Church publishes a magazine, manual, or other creation, the IPO registers the copyright with the Library of Congress. But, contrary to what many people think, a person does not have to register a copyright with the Library of Congress to have it valid. Actually, the moment a creation is fixed in a tangible form, it has copyright fixed as well. That copyright belongs to the creator. These rules guide photography, art, music, and the written word; anything an individual creates is protected. A person can take pictures, and each time a new picture is taken, a new copyright is created.

**RE:** How does the Church protect copyrights?

**Petersen:** Here in the Intellectual Property Office, we are vigilant about protecting all copyrights, both those the Church owns and those that private individuals own. As a result, we track infringing Web sites and other forms of copyright abuse. Once a Church member came to us with a product he had made featuring a beautiful painting by Harry Anderson. He actually wanted to use the Anderson painting to sell his products. Now the Church holds the copyright to that painting. It hangs in nearly every temple in the world. We told him he could not use the painting. He had invested a great deal of money in his product, and he was incensed that we would deny him permission to use that painting. But we had to protect the sacred character of that painting. So we simply invoked the copyright law.

There are several ways to defend against copyright infringement. We do not always have to sue people or companies. One of the best is called a UDRP. It means Universal Dispute Resolution Process. It is much less expensive than going to court. The parties come together and submit the case to a panel of experts. Before going to the panel, each of the parties must agree to abide by the decision of the panel.
The process was created because of the many, many cases of infringement caused by the proliferation of the Internet.

It is so easy to place pictures on the Internet or download them. People have come to use it as an open source for materials. And usually they don’t think about copyright infringement. But whenever someone takes the intellectual property of another and uses it without permission, that is copyright infringement.

RE: What advice do you have for teachers who want to use Church materials?

Petersen: Here are some questions and answers that I just finished writing for a group of teachers. These are the most commonly asked questions that we have relative to copyright law.

“Can I copy music?” If you want to use the songs from the Church hymnbook or Children’s Songbook for Church purposes, you can usually copy that music unless there is a specific notation that says “Do not copy” following the song. Our hymnbook contains a few wonderful old Protestant hymns. Usually, these may not be copied, so watch for that notation. Most important, you may not go down to the music store and buy one copy of music for the choir, take it back to the ward library, or any library, and make dozens of copies for choir members. Your bishops will just have to invest in enough music for the entire choir. As bishop of my ward, I invest $300 a year for choir music.

“Can I download music off the Internet, or some other electronic medium, for Church purposes?” Almost always the answer is no, unless you are paying a licensing fee to some organization. You should always contact the publisher of the music before such downloading. Even though the electronic means have made such downloading very easy, we must be honest. Our Church teaches honesty. Think how you would feel if you had created a beautiful piece of music—perhaps it was your livelihood to sell this music—and then someone simply stole your creation, paying you nothing. There was a very prominent musician who was giving a fireside not too long ago. A woman came up to him and thanked him for writing such beautiful music. She told him that she hoped he would be able to continue doing it forever. He asked her where she had purchased the music. She said, “Oh, I just downloaded it off the Internet.” She had no clue that she had stolen his livelihood. He said, “How can I keep writing beautiful music if my children cannot be fed?” Those were his words to me.

“Can I copy Church manuals?” We encourage you to copy the materials in Church manuals for family, home, and personal use. You
may not, however, sell the materials that you copy. These materials may not be used for commercial profit. They were created through consecrated effort, meaning those who created them did not receive pay. Their work was done because of a priesthood calling. The Church does not want such efforts to enrich someone publicly or privately. I have worked on many, many occasions late into the night with these committees. Their efforts are truly remarkable. You cannot pay someone to do what these committees do.

“Can I copy pictures from the Church magazines?” You may copy these pictures for your family, home, and personal use unless it says “May not be copied” near the picture. When the Church purchases the rights to use a painting, the artist specifies the extent of copyrights he or she is willing to give. We must abide by the terms of the specific contract that allows us to use that painting in the magazines.

I would like to talk more about the Internet here. The Internet has exploded on us in the last five or six years and has changed the way we actually live. I just returned from a conference in San Francisco. It was the Eighth Annual Internet Law Conference. I was astounded to learn what the Internet has actually done to business. The ease of response, the quickness of a business transaction, and the rapid movement of money across the airwaves have all created a climate of increased commerce. But the Internet has also created a climate for outright larceny. Many people do not hesitate a second to use the Internet to get any advantage they can economically. A little belatedly, businesses are waking up to new ways their products are being taken without appropriate payment being made. These same businesses are now investing in ways to track illegal copying, and they are going after even the small-time infringement cases.

“How can I get permission to use Church materials for a commercial purpose?” When the Church clearly owns the copyright, trademark, or patent to intellectual property, we do license others to use it. A good example is the CTR shield. We license several companies to make rings. This brings in enough revenue each year to serve the missionary program of the Church well. All the proceeds go directly to further the cause of the gospel. We would appreciate it if people wanting to use Church intellectual property would first send us an e-mail requesting such use. Get permission before you use material for profit. Write to cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org. Or just call us at 1-801-240-3959.

“Can I show commercial videos and DVDs at Church functions?” Generally, no. You can, however, under certain circumstances. It is
okay to show a movie in the course of face-to-face teaching (if it relates to the topic of the lesson). But if you are going to show a commercial movie to a large gathering of seminary students, you must buy a public performance license. If you are showing a commercial movie in your home to a few friends, then you may do that simply by purchasing the movie. But this does not allow you to show it to large groups. The cover or jacket to any movie will usually have licensing information on it. At least it will give you a number you can call.

“Can I alter Church-produced audiovisual materials to make special programs for Church activities?” No. Before I came to the Intellectual Property Office, my wife was known in my local stake as the “video lady.” I often helped her. She would take Church-produced videos and cut and clip them so as to make wonderful backdrop scenery for our stake youth choirs. The programs were lovely and inspiring. What we did not realize, however, was that embedded into every Church audiovisual product are materials with special rights attached. These materials may be used only in the context they were originally planned to accomplish. Every composer, lyricist, or photographer has rights. They have the rights to determine how their products appear. A local cutting table does not accomplish this. And it is illegal. I remember what a shock it was for me to learn that even the individual paintings on the wall during an interview that is taped by our Audiovisual Department have copyrights that must be taken into account. Our office requires every designer or producer to submit a copyright Intellectual Property Report before any product is released to the public. Every element of a production must be accounted for—every painting on the wall, every song, and every selection of poetry. All of these have rights attached to them. We must be vigilant in protecting the rights of others.

“What about Church copy machines? Can we use them?” Recently, our office had a sticker made up for every Church copy machine in the world. On this sticker, we quote the specific laws that Church members are bound by when they make copies. Everyone should read this sticker before making copies. You should not use Church copiers to make personal copies, especially when you are duplicating copyrighted work. Keep in mind the fact that every time you make a copy on a Church copier, you should ask yourself these questions: Does this material have a copyright? Am I violating that copyright? Am I creating a derivative work? Am I making money out of this either personally or for the Church? Do I need to pay a royalty? Does the Church need to pay a royalty? Now, if a Church teacher is just trying to put together something good for his or her seminary or Sunday School class and Church-produced materials are being used, we would usually allow
copying as long as such copying does not violate copyright law.

**RE:** When can teachers use copyrighted materials in a classroom?

**Petersen:** In section 110 of the U.S. Copyright Code, there is a part of the law called face-to-face teaching. Let me read from that: “[The] performance or display of a work by instructors or pupils in the course of face-to-face teaching activities of a nonprofit educational institution, in a classroom or similar place devoted to instruction,” is allowed. This, however, does not apply “in the case of a motion picture or other audiovisual work . . . that was not lawfully made . . . and that the person responsible for the performance knew or had reason to believe was not lawfully made.” (See also www.copyright.gov/title17.)

**RE:** Some instructors like to create Web sites to pass along their instructions. Is that okay?

**Petersen:** The First Presidency has asked that Church teachers and members not create unofficial Web sites. I know of several teachers who literally load Web sites down with “extra stuff” to use in Sunday School classes. You can see teachers coming to class with their arms loaded with things to pass out to their class members. They often get this material from these unofficial Web sites. The Church works hard to keep the members studying directly from the scriptures and the words of the prophets. The curriculum plans developed by the Church contain sufficient materials to call forth the Spirit. Remember, a teacher’s goal must be to have the Spirit testify to the student that the gospel is true. That is not usually accomplished by having the student pack away an armload of paper. As good as these handouts are, most of them end up on the floor, in the garbage cans, or stuffed into a drawer somewhere. I know because I have cleaned up the chapel after Sunday classes on numerous occasions.

**RE:** What is “fair use,” and how does it apply to teachers?

**Petersen:** Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Code says this: “In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include . . . the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes.” Therefore, first, your use must be for noncommercial purposes. Most research would be dead if we did not have “fair-use” laws. Teachers and students doing research need to quote from authorities, but if the final research
paper contains 80 percent quotations, that is hardly “fair use.” I know students and some professional writers who have simply dovetailed together quotes of prominent men and women and published them. Wherever we can, we stop these kinds of publications. As a bishop, I do not like to see youngsters giving talks where they read entire articles from Church magazines over the pulpit. I have tried an experiment in my ward. I require the youth to go to the pulpit with nothing more than their scriptures and one or two quotes from the prophets. It is amazing how much more the Spirit testifies in these talks.

The second thing to consider in defining “fair use” is “the nature of the copyrighted work.” There are occasions where instructors will take the very essence of another person’s work and just copy the idea. This violates “fair use.” It doesn’t take many key words of a central idea to place a person in violation. President Gerald Ford once sued an author who had copied just three words from one of his writings. The court held in favor of President Ford because these words, of course, were the very heart of his article. The party being sued said, “Well, we only copied three words!” But those three words were the very essence—the heart—of the writing.

Generally, we say in this office, trying to establish a guideline that fits, that a person can copy less than a paragraph or about four lines. If it is more than that, you may be better off using your own words. Usually, the copied material has to support or buttress something you are saying yourself.

A third point to consider is the effect your copying has on the potential market for, or value of, the copyrighted work. Sometimes copying entirely destroys an original author’s ability to profit from his or her creation. A good example of this occurs when people make copies of famous artistic works and reprint them for resale. The copies may only be small notebook size or they may be a simple cross-stitch, but people begin framing them and selling them. This dilutes the market for the original artist. One of the hardest things we do is protect Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s quotes. Everyone, it seems, wants to make something to go on the wall out of one of his statements. They want to engrave the sayings in metal or print them up with burnt edges. Usually, this is not considered wrong if it is done for personal or family use, but to make them up for commercial sale without specific, written permission is a violation.

There are people who develop entire cottage industries around statements on Primary or General Authority gems; they want to use Church trademarks and symbols for commercial sale. You would not believe the number of people who want to do this. We write letters to them asking
them to refrain, and sometimes we even contact their priesthood leaders.

Fourth, sometimes people will blatantly misuse materials. I have a letter from a member who wants to use a General Authority’s quote to support a particular political position the member has. It may be a good idea, but it is not right to imply endorsement of a General Authority to one’s idea. This person wants to write to a New York newspaper. He has all kinds of research to back up his idea. Just to “salt” his argument, however, he wants to throw in a famous quote from one of the Brethren. We simply deny such permission. Again, the idea may be good; it may be a moral stance that is right. But it is not right to imply another’s endorsement without specific, written permission. We do not ever give such unless the Church Correlation Committee approves.

*RE:* What material is off-limits to reproduce in any form?

*Petersen:* Photos of temple interiors require First Presidency permission. So, if a teacher wants to use these, he or she will most likely not receive permission.

*RE:* What about the booklet *Temples* that the Church produced?

*Petersen:* The photos in the Temples booklet were all approved for publication by the Office of the First Presidency, and they may be used in classes and other Church discussions about the temples.

I have an interesting story relative to temples and copyrights that I
find fascinating. There was a time when Church administrators believed it was cost effective to contract out the photography of temples and temple interiors to local nationals. We were preparing a brochure using these locally produced photos. We found that in most countries outside the United States, copyright laws are somewhat different. In this case, copyright automatically stayed with the photographer no matter what kind of contract we had in place. So here we had a situation. The copyright to many interior temple pictures belonged to a nonmember. The legal costs to unravel that situation far outstripped any cost for sending a Church photographer to that country to take the pictures.

Copyrights are funny things. When we write contracts for intellectual property rights, we try to protect the Church as much as possible, so all rights are placed within IRI, the Church’s intellectual property holding company. Words like the following often scare people: “IRI is and shall be considered to be the author of the Material and, at all stages of completion, the sole and exclusive owner throughout the universe in perpetuity of the Material and of all right, title, and interest therein.” This is just an example of how careful the legal world has had to become. The Church is very kind in administering its contracts, but the language nevertheless of the legal documents must protect the Church. I often have artists and writers who call me, complaining, “This seems like the Church has become very legalistic!” It really has not, but at the same time, the Church has had to come to understand that these are real issues; we must face them with complete understanding. And we must follow the strict codes laid down by the laws of the world.

**RE: What are the most common copyright infringement problems you encounter?**

**Petersen:** Most of them occur on the Internet. People inside and outside the Church have come to think of the Internet as their own domain—their world. In reality, it is just another form of publication. And when materials are posted on it, copyrights must be considered. I had one young man who created a Web site using the name of the Church as a lead. Now, the logo of the Church is a registered trademark in most countries. This man was using it to attract customers to his Web site. He even used the same design on his portal as the home page design on lds.org. Once a person entered this site, it would immediately link him into the Web site’s showroom. In other words, he was just using the Church’s trademark to attract customers. This is very common. But we address this issue vigorously. In the above case, we finally took over the man’s domain name (his URL) because it violated
the Church’s trademark.
Sometimes terms become so “washed” that it is very difficult to stop the infringement. A good example is the term LDS. We have LDS book dealers, bicycle sellers, clothing manufacturers, and so forth. We even have an LDS clipart company. As much as we can, we try to limit this kind of infringement.

**RE:** What kind of a Web presence does the Church have worldwide?

**Petersen:** The Church owns well over one thousand domain names worldwide. The most important are our key identifiers. We turn such terms as Mormon, familysearch, Liahona, and the name of the Church into domain names such as mormon.org, familysearch.org, or lds.org. This protects us around the world. When an ICANN extension opens, we quickly register these key identifiers. Sometimes we’re not quick enough. We have nonmembers who own domain names that are important to the Church. Sometimes good members of the Church see the opening of these extensions before we do, and they register key domains and then donate them to the Church. This happens a lot. Sometimes divine intervention has helped us secure key domains around the world.

During the past two years, the Church has opened country sites in nearly fifty countries. All of these sites link directly back to lds.org. It is an amazing effort. It allows Church members to have instant access to Church information in many, many languages. As far as I am personally concerned, this will be a key method for bringing the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. It is an exciting day in which we live.

**RE:** What relationship does copyright law and all these guidelines have with the thirteenth Article of Faith on being honest? What are some overall principles?

**Petersen:** I do not think the vast majority of Church members ever intend to be dishonest, but in this area, there is probably more dishonesty than we would like to admit. Worldwide, it has become almost common practice to copy materials without permission. Our Church members are not exempt from this. The Internet has made it so easy. With just the flick of a switch, we can have unlimited information at our fingertips. We can copy it just as easily. And we can send it around the world.

Last week I wanted some information from a person I had served with in a bishopric, but I didn’t know where he was. I had his e-mail
address. I plugged that address into the computer, and within fifteen minutes, I had located him. He was in an airport in East Africa. He had been in Africa for four years on a mission for the Church. I was amazed. We are all linked together, but we must be very careful. This makes it easier to violate people’s privacy, to misuse their rights to materials they have created, and to violate the law.

We preach honesty. We tell the world to be honest. It is one of the temple recommend questions. Are we honest in our dealings with others? As members of the Church, we ought to live a higher standard.

RE: Do you have any other area that we may not have talked about?

Petersen: I’d like to talk more about privacy. With stake and ward Web sites coming on line, Church members need to be very careful about violating people’s privacy. We maintain a form here at the IPO called the “Release to Use Image” (RUI). We are translating the RUI form into all the major languages spoken in the Church. Before we post members’ pictures and private information on these local Web sites, we must get their permission. A man wrote to me, asking, “By what right does the Church post my private information and pictures of my family on this stake Web site?” It is a good question. We should not be doing this without the individual’s permission. This simple form can assist the stake and ward clerks. You can get copies of this form in PDF format by contacting our office. When it is desirable to post members’ pictures on a stake or local Web site, get the members to sign the RUI and store it locally. Do not send it to Church headquarters. If you have this form, it is legal to place members’ pictures on the site. It will give you a wonderfully warm Web site containing personal pictures of members.

Finally, it is a great day to be a member of the Church. It is a great day to be a teacher. We have almost reached that state spoken of in Revelation 2:17 in which “a white stone” will help us know all things. Who knows whether our electronic communications devices are a precursor to this celestial device? But we must be wise. We must use these devices with care and honesty. RE
New Discoveries in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible

Kent P. Jackson

Kent P. Jackson is a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

In November 2004, the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University published a facsimile transcription of all the original manuscripts of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. I was privileged to be one of the editors of the project and worked with those manuscripts in preparing the publication. A facsimile transcription seeks to reproduce in print—as much as is humanly and typographically possible—the writing found on a handwritten document. Thus the transcription includes the writers’ original spelling, grammar, punctuation, line endings, omissions, errors, insertions, and deletions. The purpose of the publication is to provide scholars and lay readers with an accurate reproduction of the text as found on Joseph Smith’s original manuscripts. Its importance is in the fact that those documents had never been made public before but were only available for study by a limited number of researchers.

The last Latter-day Saint leader with any hands-on involvement in the JST was Joseph Smith himself. After his death, the manuscripts were in the possession of his family and then the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, now Community of Christ). Today they are carefully preserved in the Library-Archives of the Community of Christ in Independence, Missouri. None of those who assisted the Prophet as scribes came west with the Saints, and so from the time of his death, contact between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Bible translation was for the most part severed. It was not until the 1960s that the contact was reestablished,
when Brigham Young University professor Robert J. Matthews undertook the first serious and systematic study of the original manuscripts. More recent efforts by others, including recent scholarly publications on the JST, build on the foundation established by Professor Matthews. Now, thanks to the cooperation of the Community of Christ in making possible the publication of the manuscripts, the texts are available for continued research and exploration.

During the course of our work with the New Translation (the term used by Joseph Smith and his contemporaries), we learned many things. Some confirmed what was already known, but there were also some surprises. This article will touch briefly on a few of the things we discovered.

How the Translation Was Done

Although the Prophet left no written account of the process by which the translation was accomplished, there are important clues in the manuscripts, and thus we understand the work better now than ever before.

Like many other important people of his generation, Joseph Smith did almost all of his writing with the help of scribes. In the 446 pages of the New Translation manuscripts, his handwriting is found on only four pages where he served as his own scribe and on seven other pages where he wrote small, isolated corrections. Otherwise, he dictated the text, and his scribes wrote down what they heard from him.

The translation was done sequentially—not by topic, as some have supposed. And it was done from one end of the Bible to the other, but not exactly in that order. Joseph Smith translated Genesis 1–24 between June 1830 and March 1831. Then he was instructed in a revelation to leave the Old Testament and translate the New Testament (see D&C 45:60–61), which he did from March 1831 to July 1832. He then returned to Genesis 24, and he translated from there to the end of the Old Testament, finishing in July 1833. But the translation was not complete with the original dictation. There is much evidence on the manuscripts that Joseph Smith went over sections already translated and made additional refinements and corrections—until he felt that the translation was as the Lord wanted it to be.

Before the translation began, Oliver Cowdery had purchased a Bible for Joseph Smith and himself. The Prophet used that Bible for the New Translation, apparently from the very beginning. Much of the work was done with Joseph Smith dictating the text in full. The evidence tells us that he had the Bible in front of him, likely in his lap
or on a table, and that he read from it while his scribes wrote. When he came to a passage needing revision, he would dictate words not found in the King James text until he came back to that text and continued with it. The writing on the manuscripts shows no indication of when the text was coming out of the printed Bible and when it was coming through revelation. The scribes may not have known when he was simply reading and when he was uttering words not found on the printed page. The translations of Genesis 1–24 and Matthew 1–John 5 were recorded that way.

But many Bible chapters required no changes at all, and thus midway through the translation, Joseph Smith (perhaps with some pleading by his scribe) developed a system in which only the corrections and additions would be recorded, rather than the entire text including passages with no changes. On the pages where the short-notation system was used, we see the following system at work: Joseph Smith dictated to his scribes the chapter and verse references and then only the new words or sentences. In his Bible, he marked the words to be replaced and the locations for insertions and changes. Thus the Prophet’s Bible contains the deletion and insertion points, and the manuscripts contain only the new words to be inserted. So in order to understand fully what Joseph Smith had in mind with the changes in Genesis 24–Malachi and John 6–Revelation, readers and researchers need to study both the marked Bible and the original manuscripts. In our publication of the documents, we made that possible by printing photographs of almost fourteen hundred marked verses from Joseph Smith’s Bible on pages directly facing the corresponding manuscript transcriptions.

Scribes and Dates

Modern technology has allowed us to confirm and clarify some important points regarding the scribes and the dates they worked. In the 1970s Robert Matthews developed the general chronological outline of the translation, based on evidence on the manuscripts. Our work in recent years made use of high-definition scanned images that allowed magnification and computer enhancement. As a result, we were able to see things in the electronic images that are not visible on the original manuscripts, even with a magnifying glass. But much of our progress in recent years was the result not of high technology but of good detective work. In the summer of 1995, my coeditors, Robert Matthews and Scott Faulring, were examining the pages of the first Old Testament manuscript at the RLDS archives in Independence, Missouri. Faulring was then a research historian with the Joseph Field-
ing Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History. Professor Matthews had a hunch years ago that Emma Smith may have served as one of the Prophet’s scribes.\(^7\) When looking at some handwriting attributed to John Whitmer that did not look quite as expected, they decided to act on his hunch and check the writing against some Emma Smith letters in the archives. A positive match was established that was later confirmed when Faulring did an extensive examination with other examples.\(^8\)

Thanks to the handwriting expertise of Faulring and my student assistant Brenda Johnson, we now are quite certain of the exact locations where one scribal hand ends and another begins, and we have been able to correlate some of that information with known events and dates in Church history. Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams are the known scribes, but one other scribe remains unidentified. We called him or her “Scribe X” while we worked on the manuscripts, but we gave in to the more dignified title “Scribe A” for the publication. There is also one other unidentified hand that transcribed just a few lines from one manuscript to another. Some other people, probably office workers employed by Joseph Smith, added verse breaks and corrections to the spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. RLDS archivists added a few small notations for organizational purposes, like occasional line numbers and page numbers. A few small corrections, written in pencil, appear to be in the handwriting of Joseph Smith III, the Prophet’s son and president of the RLDS Church (1860–1914). Most of them correct copying errors made by scribes. One small insertion he made to an awkward but correct King James phrase (perhaps thinking it was an error by a scribe) was mistakenly made into a footnote in the LDS edition of the Bible: “... and worthy of death” at Matthew 26:66.\(^9\)

Scott Faulring found some important historical sources that allowed us to make significant improvements in the internal dating. Two documents relating to the scribal work of Frederick G. Williams now let us know when the New Testament translation was finished (July 1832) and help us understand the timing of the corrections the Prophet made after the initial dictation.\(^10\) This revised dating is significant because it helps us correlate revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants with the progress of the JST, and it helps us deal with the question, “When was the JST finished?”

**Types of Changes in the JST**

I believe that parts of the Joseph Smith Translation restore original biblical text that had become lost since the time of the Bible’s authors.\(^11\)
There are some things in the translation that, in my opinion, cannot be explained in any other way. For example, I have found wording on the first Old Testament manuscript that I believe can only be explained as a very literal translation from a Hebrew original. The wording is so odd in English that editors after Joseph Smith’s time took it out, so it is not in the Book of Moses today. Even though I believe that the JST restores original text, it is likely that most changes have other explanations. Joseph Smith taught that some truths pertaining to our salvation were lost even before the Bible was compiled, and thus some JST corrections may reveal teachings or events that never were recorded in the Bible in the first place. Some JST changes probably edit the text to bring it into harmony with truth found in other revelations or elsewhere in the Bible. The Prophet taught: “[There are] many things in the Bible which do not, as they now stand, accord with the revelation of the Holy Ghost to me,” necessitating latter-day correction.

Many changes edit the wording of the Bible to make it more clear and understandable for modern readers. As I examined the changes the Prophet made, I was surprised to see that more individual corrections appear to fall into this last category than into any other. Few are aware of that (nor was I), because the JST footnotes in our LDS Bible rightly focus on the more important matters of doctrine and history. There are many instances in which the Prophet rearranged word order or added words to make the text easier to read or modernized the language to replace archaic King James features with current grammar and vocabulary. There are numerous changes from saith to said, from that and which to who, and from thee and ye to you. He even modernized the language of his original dictations in some instances. When refining one passage, he changed “this earth upon which thou standest, and thou shalt write” to “this earth upon which you stand, and you shall write.” But by no means were the modernizations done consistently through the manuscripts, and alternative forms like “mine hands” and “my hands” and hath and has are very frequent.

Translation and Revelation

From observing the writing on the manuscripts, it seems to me that Joseph Smith’s process for translating the Bible was different from that used for the Book of Mormon. On the original Book of Mormon manuscript, there is very little evidence that he struggled with wording, changed his mind, or made later revisions to his translation. His calling was to render the text of the gold plates into the English language, and it appears that he was to do so without modifying, enlarging, or embel-
lishing what Mormon and the other authors had written. When he prepared the second printing of the Book of Mormon, he made spelling and grammatical revisions. He also made some word changes for clarification, but considering the size of the book, those were relatively few.

On the JST manuscripts, we frequently see remarkable writing that suggests that the words flowed spontaneously from the Prophet’s lips without the slightest contemplation, hesitation, or uncertainty. The first page of the translation, which begins Moses 1, gives that impression. But that does not seem to be how all the New Translation came. Other passages show evidence of exertion as the Prophet sought to obtain the right words to convey the intended meanings. There are many instances in which he changed his mind, tried different words until he felt he had them right, or dictated words with which he later was dissatisfied. And even on pages in which the text seemed to flow easily, the Prophet sometimes returned later to make additional corrections and refinements. All of that evidence shows that Joseph Smith was very concerned to have the translation be consistent with the Lord’s will and never content until it was. It seems that in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, more so than in the Book of Mormon, the Lord’s instructions for translators were applicable: “You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (D&C 9:8; see also D&C 1:24).

As we researched the JST manuscripts, my student assistant Peter Jasinski discovered that Joseph Smith translated Matthew 26 twice, each with the help of a different scribe. The translations were done several months apart, and it appears that the Prophet simply forgot that he had translated the chapter already. We studied the duplicate translations carefully, believing that they would help us understand the nature of the JST better. The two new translations are not identical; in fact, there are considerable differences. The rewordings for clarity and modernizations of archaic language were done without great consistency, with both of the translations contributing in unique ways. For example, in one of the translations, Joseph Smith modernized most of the King James pronouns, but he changed few in the other.

The most important changes were those that introduced new content or changed a verse’s meaning. What we found when we examined those changes amazed us and added to our appreciation of Joseph Smith and his inspired work. Although some content changes were unique to one new translation or the other, the majority were found in both. Yet the new thoughts the Prophet added to the two translations
were rarely expressed in the same words, and often they were not even inserted at the same locations in the text. In other words, he made the same corrections but not necessarily in the same words or the same places.

Why were the two inspired translations of the same chapter not identical? Joseph Smith taught that when the Holy Ghost gives us “pure intelligence,” it serves in “expanding the mind [and] enlightening the understanding” with “sudden strokes of ideas.” Our conclusion was as follows: “Perhaps it would be reasonable to propose that as Joseph Smith worked his way through Matthew 26, dictating the text to his scribe Sidney Rigdon in spring 1831 and again to his scribe John Whitmer the next fall, impressions came to his mind in the form of pure intelligence, enlightened understanding, and sudden strokes of ideas—but not necessarily in exact words. Responding to those impressions, the Prophet himself supplied the words that corrected the problem or emphasized the point or otherwise caused the verse to express the ideas that the Lord wanted it to communicate.” This may explain why the duplicate translations are verbally different.

The Text of the Book of Moses

In an earlier article, I gave a general review of how the JST and the Book of Moses came to be. Many Latter-day Saints still do not know that the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price is an excerpt from the JST. It includes the vision Moses had before God revealed to him the Creation account (now Moses 1), and it includes the JST of Genesis 1:1–6:13 (now Moses 2–8). Our Book of Moses text did not come from Joseph Smith’s original manuscripts, however, because those were not available to Latter-day Saints when the Pearl of Great Price was created and when subsequent editions were prepared.

Joseph Smith made his initial translation of the early Genesis chapters between June 1830 and February 1831. Sometime during the next two years, he made additional corrections and refinements to the translation. Years later, Joseph Smith III headed a committee to prepare the publication of the *Inspired Version*, which is a printed version of the Joseph Smith Translation, edited, prepared in Bible format, and published by the RLDS Church beginning in 1867. Unfortunately, the committee did not understand fully the intent of the original manuscripts, and as a result, many of the Prophet’s corrections were not included in the *Inspired Version* text. Because Latter-day Saints in Utah had no access to the original manuscripts, the *Inspired Version* was the best text available to them, and thus in the 1878 Latter-day
Saint Pearl of Great Price, the RLDS *Inspired Version* text through Genesis 6:13 was copied and included verbatim, creating what we now call the Book of Moses. With modifications in editions of 1902, 1921, and 1981, it has remained our text ever since. The 1902 edition made many changes in the text of the Book of Moses, but changes in the later editions were minor.

**When Was the JST Finished?**

It is often heard in the Church that Joseph Smith’s Bible translation was never finished, an assumption that stems from the nineteenth century when we had no access to the manuscripts and virtually no institutional memory about the translation. But careful study of the manuscripts and early historical sources teaches us otherwise. Although in one sense the JST was not finished, in the most important ways it was. It was not finished in the sense that things still needed to be done to get it ready for printing. The spelling on the manuscripts reflects the idiosyncrasies of the individual scribes, the grammar sometimes reflects the frontier English of Joseph Smith, the punctuation is inconsistent, and not all of the text was divided systematically into chapters and verses. The Prophet had assigned assistants to take care of most of those needs, but by the time of his death there was yet much technical work to be done. The Joseph Smith Translation was still in need of editors.

But the translation itself was finished as far as was intended. We know that because the Prophet said so on more than one occasion. At the conclusion of the Old Testament, where the translation ends, the following words are written: “Finished on the 2d day of July 1833.” That same day, the Prophet and his counselors, JST scribes Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, wrote to Church members in Missouri and told them, “We this day finished the translating of the Scriptures for which we returned gratitude to our heavenly father.” Could more have been done with the translation? Yes, but it was not designed to be. The Lord could have revealed other things in the JST, but He did not. Instead, beginning in July 1833, Joseph Smith no longer spoke of translating the Bible but of publishing it, which he wanted and intended to do “as soon as possible.” As Robert Matthews pointed out years ago, the Prophet’s own words show that from then on, his efforts were to have it printed as a book, and he repeatedly encouraged Church members to donate money for its publication. But other priorities and a lack of funds caused that it was not printed in his lifetime.

The Bible Dictionary in the English LDS Bible states that Joseph Smith “continued to make modifications [in the translation] until his
death in 1844.” Based on information available in the past, that was a reasonable assumption, and I taught it for many years. But we now know that it is not accurate. The best evidence points to the conclusion that when the Prophet called the translation “finished,” he really meant it, and no changes were made in it after the summer (or possibly the fall) of 1833.

The primary evidence is in the handwriting on the manuscripts. In the process of translating the Bible, Joseph Smith made an initial dictation of the text and then later went back over parts of it to make further refinements and corrections. He called that second stage of the process the “reviewing.” The historical sources tell us that the review of previously translated material was going on while the initial translation of other parts of the Bible was still under way. In July 1832 Joseph Smith announced the completion of the New Testament translation and the shift back to the Old Testament, which had been set aside some time earlier. Then in February 1833, during the time he was engaged in the Old Testament translation with Frederick G. Williams as scribe, he announced that the “reviewing” of the New Testament had just been completed, for which Sidney Rigdon was the primary scribe. The manuscripts show a frequent pattern of translating with one scribe and making additional corrections with another.

What does the handwriting tell us about when the final corrections were completed? Richard P. Howard, an RLDS historian who did early research on the JST manuscripts, wrote that the later corrections were “most likely in the handwriting of Joseph Smith, Jr.” Based on that assessment, he and others concluded that the Prophet continued to refine the translation, even until his death in 1844. But, in fact, extremely few of the later corrections are in Joseph Smith’s handwriting. Of the hundreds of corrections made after the original dictation, only fifteen small revisions are in Joseph Smith’s hand. Of the rest, roughly 10 percent are in the hand of Frederick G. Williams, and most of those are in the New Testament and thus were made by February 1833. The remaining 90 percent are in the hand of Sidney Rigdon, and the vast majority of those are early in the New Testament (made by February 1833) and in Old Testament sections that had been translated in 1830 and early 1831. As far as we know from early documents, Elder Rigdon served as the Prophet’s scribe only until the fall of 1833, which is therefore probably the last possible date for any translation changes. Both men were out of Joseph Smith’s favor by 1839. What later writing there is on the manuscripts appears to be the work of the Prophet’s clerks to prepare for the printing—the insertion of punctuation, capitalization, and verse numbers.
The Miracle of the New Translation

The Joseph Smith Translation is a miracle—a divine act of God. Its origin is expressed on the manuscripts in words like these: “A Revelation given to Joseph the Revelator,”30 “A Revelation given to the Elders of the Church of Christ,”31 and “A Translation of the New Testament translated by the power of God.”32 To these can be added the Lord’s words about it in the Doctrine and Covenants: “And the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect” (D&C 35:20). Given these statements, it is hard to imagine that any Latter-day Saint would not take the JST seriously and earnestly seek to learn from it.

My work with the manuscripts increased my appreciation for what this collection of revelation adds to our religion. Consider the following list of doctrines for which the JST makes unique contributions or is our only or best source:33 the nature of God, the scope of the Father’s work, the mission of Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation, the character and motives of Satan, the Fall of Adam, the antiquity of the gospel, Enoch and the establishment of Zion, the doctrine of translation, Melchizedek and his priesthood, the destiny of the house of Israel, the purpose of animal sacrifice, the age of accountability, the origin of the law of Moses, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and the degrees of glory.

As one of the editors of the Joseph Smith Translation texts, I labored over the Prophet’s manuscripts most working days and many Saturdays for over six years, a privilege that I will always consider to be among the high points of my life. On numerous occasions I felt to say, as Oliver Cowdery did regarding his service as scribe for the Book of Mormon: “These were days never to be forgotten.”34 On the wall of the office where we worked, my student assistants placed pictures of each of Joseph Smith’s scribes for his Bible revision. We felt honored to be in their company as we worked to make more fully available to the Latter-day Saints this great work of revelation—the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

Notes


3. For example, see Doctrine and Covenants 124:89.
4. Old Testament Manuscript 2, pages 81, 82, 83, and 86.
9. The JST footnotes came from the printed RLDS Inspired Version (1944 edition), not from the manuscripts. See New Testament Manuscript 2, folio 2, page 4, line 9; and RLDS Committee Manuscript, Matthew, page 73, line 6, Library-Archives, Community of Christ, Independence, Missouri. The words “and worthy” are inserted on both manuscripts in Joseph Smith III’s handwriting.
10. Frederick G. Williams, undated statement concerning his employment as scribe, Frederick G. Williams Papers, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter, Church Archives); and Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps, July 31, 1832, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives, published in Dean C. Jessee, ed., The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 274.
11. For an extended discussion of the possible types of changes in the JST, see Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible, 8–11.
17. Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 4–5; spelling standardized. I thank my friend Richard D. Draper for bringing this quotation to my attention in this context.
20. The Book of Moses material in the 1851 Liverpool Pearl of Great Price was fragmentary, out of order, and came from preliminary manuscripts. The 1878 edition contained a much more accurate and complete text.
21. For a detailed history of the Book of Moses text, see Kent P. Jackson, The
Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005).


23. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams to the Brethren in Zion, July 2, 1833, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives, published in Joseph Smith, History of the Church, 1:368.

24. “You will see by these revelations that we have to print the new translation here at kirtland for which we will prepare as soon as possible.” Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams to Edward Partridge, August 6, 1833, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives.


27. “We have finished the translation of the New testament . . . , we are making rapid strides in the old book [Old Testament] and in the strength of God we can do all things according to his will” (Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps, July 31, 1832, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives, published in Jessee, Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, 274).


30. Old Testament Manuscript 1, page 1, line 1.


33. The following list summarizes Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible, 20–25. References can be found there.

34. Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate 1, no. 1 (October 1834): 14.
New Publications

*A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church, Vol. 2*

On July 21, 1847, Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow, with one horse between them, paused at the mouth of Emigration Canyon and then made their way into the Great Salt Lake Valley, the first Latter-day Saints to walk on the land that would become their home. This volume tells the story of Latter-day Saint publishing efforts as the Church settled Utah. It also features detailed descriptions of Orson Pratt’s missionary publications in England and the printed works of missionaries in France, Italy, Denmark, and the Pacific islands. Researchers, librarians, book collectors, and serious students of Mormonism will find this book a valuable reference guide to these early publications.

Window of Faith: Latter-day Saint Perspectives on World History
Edited by Roy A. Prete

Historians rarely discuss God’s hand in history. This collection offers the vantage point of faith in viewing the events of the modern world. The book features Elder Alexander B. Morrison’s keynote address on God’s role in history, along with timely articles that delve into the role of divine providence in world events. Topics include the voyage of Columbus to the Americas, the birth of freedom in the Western world, scientific and technical advances, and the rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

$49.95, 8½ × 11 in., ISBN 0-8425-2610-2, 565 pages

Latter-day Saint Nurses at War: A Story of Caring and Sacrifice
Edited by Patricia Rushton, Lynn Clark Callister, and Maile K. Wilson

“They looked like skeletons. Their physical condition was deplorable, and many were too weak to eat by themselves. Some would cry silently as we fed them as if they were babies.” So wrote Latter-day Saint nurse Ora Mae Hyatt of the survivors of the Bataan Death March during World War II. This volume tells the story of faithful nurses who served in campaigns from World War I through Operation Iraqi Freedom.

$29.95, 8 × 11 in., ISBN 0-8425-2611-0, 312 pages

Salvation in Christ: Comparative Christian Views
Edited by Roger R. Keller and Robert L. Millet

What do Christians believe about spiritual rebirth, justification, sanctification, and the fate of people who did not hear the gospel in their lifetimes. Scholars from many Christian traditions share their perspectives in this volume. The goal, as Religious Education dean Andrew C. Skinner stated, was “to speak, listen, and learn from one another” and “to become better acquainted with various faith traditions.”

$24.95, 6 × 9 in., ISBN 0-8425-2606-4; 384 pages
Religious Studies Center

Established in 1975 by BYU Religious Education Dean Jeffrey R. Holland, the Religious Studies Center (RSC) is the research arm of 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 enhance understanding of revealed 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.
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“BYU—Hawaii is a living laboratory where people of many cultures experience a transformation, where they shed prejudices, misunderstandings, and historical baggage.”