

.....**LESSON #8**

Purpose: To teach the principle that we are placed on the earth at this time according to God’s knowledge and plan; that we must practice the principles of provident living in order to grow skilled in them; and to provide personal and individual challenges for the class members to improve their preparedness.

Teacher Preparation:

- (1) Prepare copies of handouts for each student:
 - “Unto the Rising Generation,” by Neal A. Maxwell, *Ensign*, April 1985, p. 8.
 - “If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear,” by President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, November 2005, p. 60.
 - “Be Prepared. . . Be Ye Strong from Henceforth,” by Keith B. McMullin, *Ensign*, November 2005, p. 10.
 - “Seek Learning by Faith,” by David A. Bednar, Address to CES Religious Educators, February 3, 2006.
 - “Dry Beans and Peas,” by Georgia Lauritzen, USU Extension, Publication No. FN 207.
 - “Beans,” Utah State University Extension publication from the Nutrition Education Program.
 - “Use It or Lose It. . . Dry Beans,” Chapter 11 of Utah State University Food Storage Cooking School publication.
 - “The Pioneer Woman”
 - “Doc Blue’s Emergency Medical Kit,” from www.avw.com.
 - “New Ideas for Cooking with Basic Food Storage,” from Church Welfare Department.
 - Provident-Living Challenges
- (2) If desired, prepare one or two samples of bean products for the class to sample.
- (3) Read and prayerfully study 3 Nephi 1:29-30; Elder Bednar’s talk, “Seek Learning by Faith,” and the handouts provided for this lesson.

Suggestions for Lesson:

Introduction:

This is the last week of the Provident Living course, but class members have surely realized that learning to live providently is an ongoing learning experience and challenge. Not all members of

the Church are ready for all the areas of frugality that have been talked about in this class, and not all have the same interests, skills, and abilities.

Point out that not at any time during this course have we intended to be judgmental, or to insist that certain things must be done in certain ways. It *is* our intent, however, to provide examples and resources, to give ideas, and to start our ward members thinking about their financial and preparation priorities.

Remind the class that no one person or organization has all the answers, and that this is an ongoing challenge for all of us--to live as providently, prudently, and frugally as we can. Therefore we hope that all class members will make notes of their questions may have about food storage, preservation, and family living skills, so we may try to find answers or help.

Spiritual Preparedness:

Have a class member read 3 Nephi 1:29-30.

Point out that these two verses are among the most frightening passages in all the Book of Mormon. Since the book of Third Nephi is even closer in time to the coming of the Savior than was Helaman, which was discussed last week, this last line, “because of the wickedness of the rising generation,” should raise giant red flags to us about the challenges facing our children and our families.

Elder Maxwell pointed out in his address, “Unto the Rising Generation,” that this rising generation of young men and women are part of that group of special spirits preserved to come forth in the last days of the last dispensation.

- They have been “*reserved* by the Lord for this time, they must now be *preserved* by parents and *prepared* for their special moment in human history.”
- This rising generation must believe “because of the word”--the teachings of Christ, and that they must “behave because they believe!”

Elder Maxwell speaks of the necessity of preventive medicine--helping parents be truly converted so they may properly teach and guide their children. He ends with a final thought:

Just as the rising generation is here, now, by divine design--so are we who have been placed just ahead of them. Our lives and theirs have and will intersect many times before it is all over, and not by accident God bless us with a sense of being about Our Father’s business and with a keen sense of trusteeship for the rising generation.

Emphasize that all of the different aspects of spirituality that we have talked about these past seven weeks are individual areas in which we need to improve ourselves, not just for our

individual salvation but so that we can give our children the foundations they will need even more than *we* have needed them.

- Sometimes we may make excuses for our own slacking in one or more of these areas, but when we realize the effect of such slacking upon those little ones to whom we are providing the example, we *must* realize that the potential devastating effect will be too costly.
- Each of us must make the resolution, asking for God's grace to help us carry through, to spend our lives in personal progress in obedience to His commandments, so that we may be attuned to our children's needs and set examples for them that will provide bulwarks of steadiness in their lives--lightposts to which they may look for guidance as they face their own trials and tests.

Point out that we have given only a brief overview of the areas of spiritual preparedness (understanding that preparedness is an individual process, payment of tithing, prayer, scripture study, temple attendance, enduring to the end, listening to our prophets' counsel for our day, and striving for personal humility before God), but the hope is that this overview has helped the class to recognize how each of these factors are vital components of provident living.

Emphasize that it is vitally important for every member of the Church to recognize that his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is dependent upon the assurance that he is keeping the commandments of the Lord to the best of his ability. **THEN AND ONLY THEN** are we able to move forward with the complete assurance that all things will work together for our good.

Provident Living:

Food Storage:

Point out that the five basic food items we have been counseled to store includes beans and legumes as part of the "grains" area. Beans are high in fiber, low in fat, and a good source of protein, carbohydrates, folate, and many trace minerals. They have the added advantages of being low in cost and storing well.

Beans have an undeserved bad reputation in modern life, compared with their value to food storage, economy, and nutrition. Beans complement wheat to provide a complete protein, necessary as a "building block" of life. The cost per pound of beans is between 44 and 48 cents at the Church Canneries, compared to 17 cents for wheat, and many dollars per pound of meat. Beans also are capable of being sprouted, so that their nutritional value is increased in the same manner as germinated wheat.

The student packet includes three publications from the Utah State University Extension department.

- The first, “Dry Beans and Peas,” lists the varieties of beans that are commonly available in the Utah area and states the uses of each. It also details the preparation methods of soaking (overnight and quick soak) and cooking, and provides a nutrient profile
- The second publication, “Beans,” was prepared for the Nutrition Education Program and is very basic. This might be used for a quick mini-class on the use of beans and legumes, as it discusses cooking and storage and gives a few recipes.
- The third is from the “Use It or Lose It” Food Storage Cooking School, and includes information on using beans as a substitute for fat in baked goods, as well as a brief summary on how to home-bottle dried beans or peas.

Remind the class that the USDA “Complete Guide to Home Canning” (included in the second week’s packet) gives detailed canning instructions for beans and peas, on pages 4-2 through 4-4.

Financial Preparedness:

Ask the class the questions: As you have increased your efforts to live providently, have you noticed any particular challenges? What feelings or experiences hinder you in your goals? What feelings or experiences encourage you?

[Give the class members the opportunity to share what they’ve been doing, or their personal experiences.]

Remind the class that living providently is not particularly easy. In fact, it goes against the call of the world that we see on every side, in every television advertisement, portrayed in every movie. Living frugally requires planning, hard work, and perseverance in mastering skills.

It is easy to take for granted the many conveniences and products available to us, that are made by other people, that we can purchase in the store, use for a while, and then toss out and replace.

- But we come from a heritage of people who provided for themselves, who made do with what they had, sacrificing their time and their means to build up this Church and kingdom for the benefit of all mankind.
- This Church was founded by a people whose principal desire was to create Zion--a Zion place and a Zion people. We need to resolve to match them.

Our pioneer ancestors lived much more independently that our present society is accustomed to. To many people, the homesteading, self-reliant lifestyle is appealing and attractive, but the actual

Surely the same principle applies to our personal preparedness. We received renewed assurance from President Gordon B. Hinckley that “if we are prepared, we shall not fear.”

As we resolve to implement these skills and this knowledge, we have the promises from the Lord that He will help us, given to us both by ancient prophets:

I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. (1 Nephi 3:7)

and modern:

“I believe that if we will walk in obedience to the commandments of God . . . he will open a way where there appears to be no way.” Gordon B. Hinckley, “If Ye Be Willing and Obedient, *Ensign*, July, 1995, p. 2.

Every skill that you become familiar with, every commodity that you lay in for your family’s stores, every tool whose use you master (whether a sewing needle or a wood-working implement, a canning procedure or an automotive tool), will raise your level of self-sufficiency.

Point out the “Provident-Living Challenges” sheet in the student packet for this lesson. Challenge the class to pick an area of interest in which to develop skills in the coming year, such as the ones identified in this course.

- Decide how you will learn the skill.
- Set up a time frame in which to learn the skill.
- Talk with the Lord about why you want to accomplish this particular goal.
- Write your plans in your journal, or in your scriptures, or in a special notebook, and review your goal frequently.
- When the goal has been met, talk with the Lord again, to thank Him for supporting you in acquiring this skill.
- Ask the Lord how He would have you use your new skill.
- Ask the Lord what area He would have you approach next.

Remind the class that this is an ongoing, life-long challenge.

Remind the class also that, as with any effort in life, there will be periods of success and periods of failure, but that the important idea is to continue in their efforts.

Emphasize that the highest covenant we make in the gospel is the covenant of consecration--giving our time, talents, and all that we have, for the purpose of serving God.

- Our purpose in living providently is to have greater means to consecrate to the Lord.
- A provident-living mind-set may require a re-evaluation of our goals in life, the type of house we wish to live in, the cost of the car we choose to buy, the brands of the clothes we decide to wear.

If the teacher deems it appropriate, make the following challenge to the class:

I challenge you to use financial budgets and persevere with them, asking for the Lord's assistance in doing so.

I challenge you to set financial goals, debt elimination goals, food storage goals--and to set up reasonable, workable plans by which you may meet those goals.

I challenge you to speak with the Lord concerning your desires to serve Him--to share your means through fast offerings and humanitarian service, perhaps through offering employment to others, to be reasonable in your wants and expectations so that you can consecrate your excess means to Him.

Bear your testimony that you can promise the class, along with these challenges, that the more they strive to become self-sufficient in the Lord's way, the more second-nature these practices will become. They will cease to seem difficult, and will become rewarding. We will enjoy seeing the fruits of our labors. We will enjoy blessings of peace of mind. We will see our children grow to be productive members of society because they learned how to work at home.

The ultimate promise is that all of the blessings promised to us by our living prophets and in the scriptures will be ours, not just for this life, but for eternity.

I pray that the Lord's blessings will be upon each of you and in your homes, as you take the principles to heart that we've discussed herein, and as you prepare your homes to meet the increasing confusing and turbulence of the future.

Remember always: Our Heavenly Father loves each of individually and collectively. He wants only what is best for us, but only *He* knows what *is* best for us. As we put our faith and trust in Him, He will give us increased ability and knowledge, a greater awareness of His presence, and we will grow from day to day in our desire to return to Him, to merit his accolade: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

“Unto the Rising Generation”

By Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve
Ensign, Apr. 1985, 8

This is an edited version of an address given by Elder Maxwell on 6 April 1984 at the Friday evening leadership meeting associated with April general conference.

We must do more both to create and use soul-shaping experiences in the lives of our youth. In the allocation of your precious time and talent, be generous with the rising generation.

We are here tonight to talk about the central concerns of the Kingdom, including the rising generation of Church members and the need for their full conversion.

We have long heard, and believed, that the Lord has reserved special spirits to come forth in the last days of the last dispensation. The Church’s rising generation of young men and women are a part of that vanguard. *Reserved* by the Lord for this time, they must now be *preserved* by parents and *prepared* for their special moment in human history! They have been *held back* to come forth at this time, but now they need to be *pushed forward* to meet their rendezvous.

The first thing to be said is also the most obvious: if we wish to help the youth of the Church, the best thing we can do is to help their parents. This is why the challenges of activating more of our adults and preparing more of our youth are so tightly intertwined. Said one way, if parents sneeze, their children may get pneumonia! Hence, the best medicine is always preventive medicine.

Furthermore, this rising generation is the first generation to be reared in a time when society’s other institutions, previously supportive of certain moral standards, have been largely neutralized, or worse, secularized. This rising generation, shorn of such external support systems, must therefore believe “because of the word”—and behave because they believe! (See Alma 32:13–14.)

As we all know, current film, music, art, and theater too often promote drugs, alcohol, pornography, and promiscuity. This is not simply a temporary tidal wave which, ere long, will pass. It is the wave-tossed secular sea itself! And that tempest will not subside until He comes, and all the winds and the waves, once again, obey His will!

Hence, this is not a time for busy or preoccupied parents to leave our youth unloved, unattended, or untaught. These special spirits deserve better than such parental disregard.

Since we cannot always adequately influence the external world in which we live, we should make our homes real Latter-day Saint homes. Parents should see to it that the music, films, and literature which are in our homes reflect a true Christian culture. Parents cannot count much on

the media to uphold traditional standards. On the contrary, greed and lust are combining, reconstituting their ancient alliance, only now on an almost global scale!

Parental time with youth is vital, therefore. Whether in activities or discussions, the family circle should be, at one and the same time, a circle of friends. Families which work, pray, and play together will usually survive spiritually. Let us, as parents and grandparents, so love, tutor, and train our youth that the sweetness they experience in their Latter-day Saint homes will, thereafter, make the world taste sour to them!

Wise and loving adult leaders of youth have always been needed, of course, but with so many broken and deficient homes, and with even good homes needing reinforcement, such leaders are desperately needed now! Better to spend time *with youth* rather than just in behalf of our youth.

A study was completed a year ago of Aaronic Priesthood young men. The findings no doubt apply with equal validity to our young women. We learned that young men born in the covenant, or sealed to their parents, are five times as likely to serve missions and be endowed themselves, and three times as likely to be married in the temple as other young men in the Church.

The lesson is obvious!

Let's remember that Church programs are useful and helpful scaffolding in soul shaping, but are not substitutes for righteous parents whose influence is several times more significant than the best of programs!

Programs are means, not ends. They are somewhat like the crowing of the reminding rooster which created a moment of spiritual recognition for Peter. (See John 13:38; Matt. 26:75.) But the rooster was only a means. Otherwise, to induce spiritual resonance the Church would quickly make a very heavy investment in roosters.

Parents are and will be our greatest asset in developing religious commitment among youth. Therefore, more must be done to see that programs are not *competitive* with the parental roles and responsibilities.

Brethren, not only are we to honor our fathers and mothers individually, but institutionally!

Meanwhile, let's not get quite so caught up in the administrative acronyms and jargon either. Such is manager's talk—not shepherd's talk. Too often, a young person's outward *non-compliance* with Church standards, or his seemingly confrontive questions, or his expressed doubts get him quickly labeled. The results can be distance and, sometimes, disaffiliation. True love does not like labels! However youth define their problems, for them, these problems are real; canned answers will not do! One wonders how many prodigals felt *put off* before they *went off*.

Happily, a young man or woman from an inactive home who gets on that strait and narrow path later becomes a parent who breaks the cycle of inactivity, just as President Kimball urged. We never save simply one soul!

Thus, the one-on-one moment of quiet caring or encouragement with parents or an adult leader is vital. No stake and ward calendar, however busy and filled with activities, can substitute for such moments.

Youth are not unlike prospective converts. There are those critical moments when their souls begin to tilt—toward the Lord or away from Him. These moments of decision cannot always be created, but when they occur, they must not be wasted. More often than not, these moments will occur in quiet and reverent conversation with parents, grandparents, a bishop, an adult leader, or a righteous peer.

Real shepherds will sense that a moment of significance is at hand because real shepherds care for, feed, and watch over the flock constantly:

“And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.” (Jer. 23:4.)

In fact, did not Jesus counsel Peter to feed His “lambs” as well as his “sheep”? (John 21:15–16.)

There is no human condition in which the unconditional love of a true shepherd is wasted.

Besides, life is not lineal, it is experiential. Clocks and calendars are merely a convenience. We must do more both to create and use such soul-shaping experiences in the lives of our youth.

Thus, as you deploy your precious manpower and womanpower, please remember this special generation of destiny! We plead that in the allocation of your precious time and talent, you be generous with the rising generation. We plead for youth and leaders who are portable preachments and walking sermons!

Another fundamental: the igniting in our youth of a love for the holy scriptures is to ignite a fire that will probably never be extinguished. After all, our youth can take their scriptures and their understanding thereof with them long after parents, bishops, and advisers, of necessity, are left behind.

Have all of you fathers given at least one father’s blessing to each of your sons and daughters? Is it a tradition in your homes? Do the fathers in your stakes and wards understand the privilege and dignity attached to the giving of such a sacred blessing? I am so grateful to my convert father for his father’s blessing pronounced upon my head.

The vital transfer of spiritual power and responsibility to the rising generation seldom occurs when fathers are too busy for such blessings, and mothers are too busy for meaningful gospel

conversations—too busy, even in Church work. Parental genes do not infuse either Church doctrine or history.

“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.” (Judg. 2:10.)

What our youth need to know about their “noble birth right,” we must teach them. Furthermore, there is a critical, formative time when the tablets of memory are soft, but the hardening can occur so quickly:

“And there was also a cause of much sorrow ... ; for behold, they had many children who did grow up and began to wax strong in years, that they became for themselves, and were led away.” (3 Ne. 1:29.)

Mercifully, even faint memories can rescue. Such was the case with Alma. He remembered, in a moment of truth, the earlier but evocative words of his father about the coming of an atoning Jesus. (See Alma 36:15–22.)

Enos, who was well taught and apparently more receptive than Alma, remembered, “I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints.” Such words had “sunk deep into [his] heart.” (Enos 1:3.)

The striplings were not the last youth, either, to be greatly blessed because “they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.” They did “not doubt our mothers knew it”! (Alma 56:47–48; see also D&C 46:13, 14.)

The rising generation can also affect, adversely or affirmatively, the older generations:

“And thus ... [they] began to decrease as to their faith and righteousness, because of the wickedness of the rising generation.” (3 Ne. 1:30.)

Leaders, we know you can’t do it all!

Most moments give us, at best, fleeting choices and opportunities, as Church leaders, to choose between emphases. Like Mary, may we more often choose the things of most worth which shall not be taken away from us, and not get too caught up in Martha-like administrative anxieties and chores! (See Luke 10:38–42.)

Incidentally, our research also shows that bishops are most effective when they do these fundamental things, such as one-on-one interviews. Bishops are least effective when they involve themselves with only the nuts and bolts of program management.

Our Church programs, of course, sometimes produce important moments of caring, of needed conversation, and a sense of belonging. But a good Scoutmaster who teaches a young man how

to make fire without matches will also be concerned with starting another and much more important kind of fire! Besides, we won't need to make fire without matches in the next world, and usually not even in this one.

Let us not entertain our youth out of fear that we will lose them; they can spot that behavior a mile away. In that sense, some of our youth are so much done *for*, they are almost done *in*! If youth are too underwhelmed, they are more likely to be overwhelmed by the world.

Functionally, how many deacons and teachers quorum presidencies consist of merely calling on someone to offer a prayer or pass the sacrament? Brethren, these really are special spirits, and they can do things of significance if given a chance!

I close with an autobiographical note. First, in remembrance of special parents who both taught and showed me the way, but also in remembrance of others: Brother Alexander was my aging, white-haired teacher when I was a deacon. He was an English convert and wore thick-lensed eye glasses. He had important qualities, but he was not really a boy's man. I can still see him sitting before us deacons with his chin resting on his cane, speaking in earnest and clipped English. Actually, he preached to us, and a bit too much at times—probably because he had once reportedly trained for the ministry in England. In fact, he even gave unrequested encores at fast and testimony meetings. But through it all, I knew he really cared for our souls and that he really believed! This was his message, a message I've never forgotten.

Soon I was a junior ward teaching companion to a Brother Wohler who spoke in a strong, German accent. He, too, preached to me and to our families. He, likewise, made regular orations in our fast and testimony meetings in which there was an almost unvaried roster of speakers. Brother Wohler would have been genuinely puzzled by the concept of two-way communication. But again, he, too, really believed. I knew he knew!

As a teacher, for a fleeting few months, my instructor was young Stephen Monson. He was decent, gentle, and fine. I also knew he really cared for me. Later, when he was a navigator in a B-17 and was killed in the air war over Europe, I was very saddened, but Steve Monson had shown me glimpses of joy.

About then into my life came a capable young bishop, M. Thirl Marsh, who, with able counselors, cared for me and for all the youth in Wandamere Ward. The radiance of the gospel showed in his life, in his family, and in his face—whether we were working together on the welfare project or sitting in sacrament meeting. He was serious about joy, but his gospel mirth abounded, because Bishop Marsh loved the Lord, life—and me!

Now, our beloved leaders, will my grandchildren, as teenagers in a much more vexing world, be as blessed as I was with behaving and believing leaders? Will yours?

One final thought: just as the rising generation is here, now, by divine design—so are we who have been placed just ahead of them. Our lives and theirs have and will intersect many times before it is all over, and not by accident. It was thirty-seven years ago now that as a young missionary my life intersected with that of an Apostle. He toured our mission and, most

unusually, participated in my call as a district president. Briefly, I felt his influence, tender touch, and imprint then. Today, I have felt them even more. He is my quorum president, Ezra Taft Benson.

God bless us with a sense of being about Our Father's business and with a keen sense of trusteeship for the rising generation.

Gospel topics: leadership, parenthood, youth

© 2006 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.

If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Ensign, Nov. 2005, 60

We can so live that we can call upon the Lord for His protection and guidance. ... We cannot expect His help if we are unwilling to keep His commandments.

My dear brethren of the priesthood, wherever you may be across this broad world—what a tremendous body you have become, men and boys of every race and kindred, all a part of the family of God.

How precious is His gift to us. He has given to us a portion of that which is His divine authority, the eternal priesthood, the power by which He brings to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. It follows that when much has been given to us much is required of us (see Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3).

I know that we are not perfect men. We know the perfect way, but we do not always act according to our knowledge. But I think that for the most part we are trying. We are trying to be the kind of men our Father would have us be. That is a very high objective, and I commend all of you who are trying to reach it. May the Lord bless you as you seek to live exemplary lives in every respect.

Now, as all of us are aware, the Gulf States area of the United States has recently suffered terribly from raging winds and waters. Many have lost all they had. The damage has been astronomical. Literally millions have suffered. Fear and worry have gripped the hearts of many. Lives have been lost.

With all of this, there has been a great outpouring of help. Hearts have been softened. Homes have been opened. Critics love to talk about the failures of Christianity. Any such should take a look at what the churches have done in these circumstances. Those of many denominations have accomplished wonders. And far from the least among these has been our own Church. Great numbers of our men have traveled considerable distances, bringing with them tools and tents and radiant hope. Men of the priesthood have given thousands upon thousands of hours in the work of rehabilitation. There have been three and four thousand at a time. There are some there tonight. We cannot say enough of thanks to them. Please know of our gratitude, of our love, and of our prayers in your behalf.

Two of our Area Seventies, Brother John Anderson, who resides in Florida, and Brother Stanley Ellis, who lives in Texas, have directed much of this effort. But they would be the first to say that the credit belongs to the great numbers of men and boys who have given assistance. Many have worn shirts that say “Mormon Helping Hands.” They have won the love and respect of those they have assisted. Their assistance has gone not only to members of the Church in trouble, but to great numbers of those concerning whom no religious affiliation has been made.

They have followed the pattern of the Nephites as recorded in the book of Alma: “They did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need” (Alma 1:30).

Women and girls in many parts of the Church have rendered a Herculean effort in providing hygiene and cleaning kits by the tens of thousands. The Church has provided equipment, food, water, and comfort.

We have contributed substantial amounts of money to the Red Cross and other agencies. We have given millions from fast offerings and humanitarian funds. To every one of you I say thanks in behalf of your beneficiaries and thanks in behalf of the Church.

Now, I do not say, and I repeat emphatically that I do not say or infer, that what has happened is the punishment of the Lord. Many good people, including some of our faithful Latter-day Saints, are among those who have suffered. Having said this, I do not hesitate to say that this old world is no stranger to calamities and catastrophes. Those of us who read and believe the scriptures are aware of the warnings of prophets concerning catastrophes that have come to pass and are yet to come to pass.

There was the great Flood, when waters covered the earth and when, as Peter says, only “eight souls were saved” (1 Pet. 3:20).

If anyone has any doubt concerning the terrible things that can and will afflict mankind, let him read the 24th chapter of Matthew. Among other things the Lord says: “Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. ...

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

“All these are the beginning of sorrows. ...

“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! ...

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matt. 24:6–8, 19, 21–22).

In the Book of Mormon we read of unimaginable destruction in the Western Hemisphere at the time of the Savior's death in Jerusalem. Again I quote:

“And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.

“And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.

“And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.

“And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.

“And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof were drowned.

“And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain. ...

“... The whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth;

“And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough.

“And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate” (3 Ne. 8:5–10, 12–14).

What a terrible catastrophe that must have been.

The plague or Black Death of the fourteenth century took millions of lives. Other pandemic diseases, such as smallpox, have brought untold suffering and death through the centuries.

In the year A.D. 79 the great city of Pompeii was destroyed when Mount Vesuvius erupted.

Chicago was ravaged by a terrible fire. Tidal waves have swamped areas of Hawaii. The San Francisco earthquake in 1906 ruined the city and took some 3,000 lives. The hurricane that hit Galveston, Texas, in 1900 killed 8,000. And more recently, as you know, has been the terrible tsunami of Southeast Asia, where thousands of lives were lost and where relief efforts are still needed.

How portentous are the words of revelation found in the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants concerning the calamities that should befall after the testimonies of the elders. The Lord says:

“For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.

“And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

“And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people” (D&C 88:89–91).

How interesting are descriptions of the tsunami and the recent hurricanes in terms of the language of this revelation, which says, “The voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.”

Man’s inhumanity to man expressed in past and present conflict has and continues to bring unspeakable suffering. In the Darfur region of Sudan, tens of thousands have been killed and well over a million have been left homeless.

What we have experienced in the past was all foretold, and the end is not yet. Just as there have been calamities in the past, we expect more in the future. What do we do?

Someone has said it was not raining when Noah built the ark. But he built it, and the rains came.

The Lord has said, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear”(D&C 38:30).

The primary preparation is also set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein it says,

“Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come” (D&C 87:8).

We sing the song:

When the earth begins to tremble, Bid our fearful thoughts be still; When thy judgments spread destruction, Keep us safe on Zion’s hill. (“Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah,” *Hymns*, no. 83)

We can so live that we can call upon the Lord for His protection and guidance. This is a first priority. We cannot expect His help if we are unwilling to keep His commandments. We in this Church have evidence enough of the penalties of disobedience in the examples of both the Jaredite and the Nephite nations. Each went from glory to utter destruction because of wickedness.

We know, of course, that the rain falls on the just as well as the unjust (see Matt. 5:45). But even though the just die they are not lost, but are saved through the Atonement of the Redeemer. Paul wrote to the Romans, “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord” (Rom. 14:8).

We can heed warnings. We have been told that many had been given concerning the vulnerability of New Orleans. We are told by seismologists that the Salt Lake Valley is a potential earthquake zone. This is the primary reason that we are extensively renovating the Tabernacle on Temple Square. This historic and remarkable building must be made to withstand the shaking of the earth.

We have built grain storage and storehouses and stocked them with the necessities of life in the event of a disaster. But the best storehouse is the family storeroom. In words of revelation the Lord has said, “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing” (D&C 109:8).

Our people for three-quarters of a century have been counseled and encouraged to make such preparation as will assure survival should a calamity come.

We can set aside some water, basic food, medicine, and clothing to keep us warm. We ought to have a little money laid aside in case of a rainy day.

Now what I have said should not occasion a run on the grocery store or anything of that kind. I am saying nothing that has not been said for a very long time.

Let us never lose sight of the dream of Pharaoh concerning the fat cattle and the lean, the full ears of corn, and the blasted ears; the meaning of which was interpreted by Joseph to indicate years of plenty and years of scarcity (see Gen. 41:1–36).

I have faith, my dear brethren, that the Lord will bless us, and watch over us, and assist us if we walk in obedience to His light, His gospel, and His commandments. He is our Father and our God, and we are His children, and we must be in every way deserving of His love and concern. That we may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Gospel topics: faith, obedience, preparation, priesthood, safety, self-reliance, service

© 2006 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.

Be Prepared ... Be Ye Strong from Henceforth

Bishop Keith B. McMullin Second Counselor in the

Presiding Bishopric

Ensign, Nov. 2005, 10

Tragedies never triumph where personal righteousness prevails.

Have you ever found yourself in a conversation where you were suddenly required to remain silent while your point of view was misconstrued and belittled? Such a thing happened to me almost 25 years ago, and the frustration of that unfinished conversation has remained to this day.

As mission president, I had been invited, with others from the Church, to meet with the mayor of one of the cities in our mission. He was cordial as he welcomed us into his office. Our conversation touched upon concerns of the day. Eventually, he asked why the Church was doing missionary work in his city.

This was not unexpected. An impression had come to me some weeks before that he would ask this question and what my response should be. I replied: "The gospel of Jesus Christ provides answers and solutions to all of the world's problems, including those confronting the good people of your city. This is why we are here."

I fully expected the mayor would want to know more. Instead, his mood changed. Skepticism then disdain took control of his countenance. He blustered about my naive approach to challenges in the world and brought our visit to an abrupt close. No further explanation was permitted.

This morning, I should like to complete that conversation. I hope the good mayor is listening because what follows is vital to a troubled world.

We are sobered by the terrible calamities of recent years. They occur with increasing frequency and intensity. Natural forces are ferocious in their scope, human assaults are merciless in their carnage, and unchecked appetites are leading to licentiousness, crime, and family decay approaching epic proportions. The tsunami in southern Asia and hurricanes in the United States, with their terrible tolls, are the most recent calamities capturing our attention. Hearts and hands from around the world reach out to those so profoundly affected. For a brief period differences yield to compassion and love.

We are indebted to those who, when buffeted by calamities, remind us of man's dependence upon God. A widow in a refugee camp, anguishing over the brutal slaying of her sons, weeps the words, "I must not lose my faith." Survivors, overwhelmed by Katrina's fury, send out the plea, "Pray for us." (1)

Causes of such calamities are the subject of seemingly endless debate. Commentators, politicians, scientists, and many others have opinions as to the causes.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, concerning the Restoration of His gospel:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; ...

“Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.” (2)

Let us turn our attention to the reasons or purposes for such calamities. Fortunately, debate is not needed here because we have the fulness of Christ’s gospel on which we can rely. Search the words of the prophets in the Book of Mormon and the Bible; read the teachings of Jesus Christ in the 24th chapter of Matthew;(3) study the Lord’s latter-day revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.(4) Herein we learn the purposes of God in such matters.

Calamities are a form of adversity, and adversity is a necessary part of Heavenly Father’s plan for the happiness of His children.

If our hearts are right before God, adversity will school us, help us overcome our carnal nature, and nurture the divine spark within us. Were it not for adversity, we would not know to “choose the better part.”(5) Adversity helps us see where we need to repent, to bring into subjection baser instincts, to embrace righteousness and enjoy “peace of conscience.”(6)

The more we cleave unto righteousness, the more we enjoy the protecting care of our Savior. He is the Creator and Lord of the universe. He will calm the winds and the waves.(7) His teachings and Atonement will heal the repentant soul. He is the Messiah or Deliverer, and because of Him, each of us can be in charge of his or her personal world, even as tragedies beset us. Listen to these truths:

“The Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that *they are redeemed* from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; *to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.*

“Wherefore, *men are free according to the flesh*; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for [the devil] seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.” (8)

We will do well to remember that the devil is the destroyer.

It is true that in this life we are only as free as our mortal circumstances allow. We may not be able to stay the course of war in distant lands or with our puny arm hold back the tempests that

rage or run freely when our body is imprisoned by failing health. *But it is verily true that such things do not ultimately control our personal world. We do!*

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God.”(9)

And so, most honorable mayor, the gospel of Jesus Christ does provide answers to all of the world’s problems, *precisely because it provides solutions to the ills of every living soul.*

Every time calamity strikes, there is a corresponding sacred obligation that falls upon each of us to become better. We should ask ourselves, “What part of my life needs to change so that the weight of chastisement need not be felt?”

In the scriptures the Lord makes clear what He expects of us as such judgments descend. He says: “Gird up your loins and be prepared. Behold, the kingdom is yours, and the enemy shall not overcome.”(10)

The Church and its members are commanded to be self-reliant and independent.(11) Preparation begins with faith, which enables us to weather vicissitudes as they come. We see earth life as a preparatory journey. Faith in the Lord and His gospel conquers fear and begets spirituality.

Spirituality grows as we “pray, and ... walk uprightly before the Lord.”(12) It is “the consciousness of victory over self and of communion with the Infinite.”(13)

Faith, spirituality, and obedience produce a prepared and self-reliant people. As we obey the covenant of tithing, we are shielded from want and the power of the destroyer. As we obey the fast and give generously to care for others, our prayers are heard and family fidelity increases. Similar blessings come as we obey the counsel of the prophets and live within our means, avoid unnecessary debt, and set aside sufficient of life’s necessities to sustain ourselves and our families for at least a year. This may not always be easy, but let us do our “very best,”(14) and our stores shall not fail—there shall be “enough and to spare.”(15)

And again the Lord says, “Be ye strong from henceforth; fear not, for the kingdom is yours.”(16)

Strength and resiliency come by righteous living. One is not righteous who is a saint on Sunday and a slacker the remainder of the week. Unchecked appetites are destructive and cause men to “trifle ... with sacred things.”(17) President Brigham Young taught, “The sin that will cleave to all the posterity of Adam and Eve is, that they have not done as well as they knew how.”(18)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the pathway to righteousness. Tragedies never triumph where personal righteousness prevails. Let us, therefore, heed the counsel of the Apostle Paul:

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”(19)

Our duty as Latter-day Saints is to prepare ourselves, this earth, and its inhabitants for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being prepared and being strong as the gospel teaches ensure happiness here and hereafter and make this “grand millennial mission” possible.

Our beloved President Hinckley has admonished: “Now, my brethren and sisters, the time has come for us to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a season to be strong. It is a time to move forward without hesitation, knowing well the meaning, the breadth, and the importance of our mission. It is a time to do what is right regardless of the consequences that might follow. It is a time to be found keeping the commandments. It is a season to reach out with kindness and love to those in distress and to those who are wandering in darkness and pain. It is a time to be considerate and good, decent and courteous toward one another in all of our relationships. In other words, to become more Christlike.”(20)

This admonition by the Lord’s prophet points our way through these turbulent times. To all who suffer, our hearts reach out to you. May Heavenly Father, in His infinite mercy, make light your burdens and fill your lives with that peace which “passeth all understanding.”(21) You are not alone. Our love and faith and prayers are joined with yours. Press forward in righteousness and all will be well.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Gospel topics: Jesus Christ, faith, obedience, preparation

1. Quoted in Evan Thomas, “The Lost City,” *Newsweek*, Sept. 12, 2005, 44.
2. D&C 1:17, 37.
3. See also Joseph Smith—Matthew.
4. See D&C 45; D&C 88; D&C 101; D&C 133.
5. “Father in Heaven, We Do Believe,” *Hymns*, no. 180.
6. Mosiah 4:3.
7. See Matt. 8:25–27; Mark 4:39.
8. 2 Ne. 2:26–27; emphasis added.
9. *History of the Church*, 5:134–35.

10. D&C 38:9.
11. See D&C 78:13–14; *Providing in the Lord’s Way: A Leader’s Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), 5.
12. D&C 68:28.
13. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, 8.
14. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
15. D&C 104:17.
16. D&C 38:15.
17. D&C 6:12.
18. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 89.
19. Rom. 13:12–14.
20. “This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 71; see also “Opening Remarks,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 4.
21. Philip. 4:7.

© 2006 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.

Bednar

Seek Learning by Faith

Elder David A.

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

February 3, 2006

Address to CES Religious Educators Jordan Institute of Religion

I express my love to and for you—and the gratitude of the Brethren for the righteous influence you have upon the youth of the Church throughout the world. Thank you for blessing and strengthening the rising generation.

I pray that the Holy Ghost will bless and edify us as we share this special time together.

Companion Principles: Preaching by the Spirit and Learning by Faith

We are admonished repeatedly in the scriptures to preach the truths of the gospel by the power of the Spirit (see D&C 50:14). I believe the vast majority of us as parents and teachers in the Church are aware of this principle and generally strive appropriately to apply it. As important as this principle is, however, it is only one element of a much larger spiritual pattern. We also frequently are taught to seek learning by faith (see D&C 88:118). *Preaching by the spirit* and *learning by faith* are companion principles that we should strive to understand and apply concurrently and consistently.

I suspect we emphasize and know much more about a teacher teaching by the Spirit than we do about a learner learning by faith. Clearly, the principles and processes of both teaching and learning are spiritually essential. However, as we look to the future and anticipate the ever more confused and turbulent world in which we will live, I believe it will be essential for all of us to increase our capacity to seek learning by faith. In our personal lives, in our families, and in the Church, we can and will receive the blessings of spiritual strength, direction, and protection as we seek by faith to obtain and apply spiritual knowledge.

Nephi teaches us, “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth [the message] unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1). Please notice how the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into* the heart. A teacher can explain, demonstrate, persuade, and testify, and do so with great spiritual power and effectiveness. Ultimately, however, the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.

Brothers and sisters, learning by faith opens the pathway *into* the heart. Tonight we will focus upon the individual responsibility each of us has to seek learning by faith. We also will consider the implications of this principle for us as teachers.

The Principle of Action: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Apostle Paul defined faith as “the substance of things hoped for, [and] the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Alma declared that faith is not a perfect knowledge; rather, if we have faith, we “hope for things which are not seen, [but] are true” (Alma 32:21). Additionally, we learn in the *Lectures on Faith* that faith is “the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness” and that it is also “the principle of action in all intelligent beings” (Joseph Smith, comp., *Lectures on Faith* [1985], 1).

These teachings of Paul and of Alma and from the *Lectures on Faith* highlight three basic elements of faith: (1) faith as the *assurance* of things hoped for which are true, (2) faith as the *evidence* of things not seen, and (3) faith as the principle of *action* in all intelligent beings. I describe these three components of faith in the Savior as simultaneously facing the future, looking to the past, and initiating action in the present.

Faith as the assurance of things hoped for looks to the future. This assurance is founded upon a correct understanding about and trust in God and enables us to “press forward” (2 Nephi 31:20) into uncertain and often challenging situations in the service of the Savior.

For example, Nephi relied upon precisely this type of future-facing spiritual assurance as he returned to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass—“not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do. Nevertheless [he] went forth” (1 Nephi 4:6–7).

Faith in Christ is inextricably tied to and results in hope in Christ for our redemption and exaltation. And assurance and hope make it possible for us to walk to the edge of the light and take a few steps into the darkness—expecting and trusting the light to move and illuminate the way (see Boyd K. Packer, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54). The combination of assurance and hope initiates action in the present.

Faith as the evidence of things not seen looks to the past and confirms our trust in God and our confidence in the truthfulness of things not seen. We stepped into the darkness with assurance and hope, and we received evidence and confirmation as the light in fact moved and provided

the illumination we needed. The witness we obtained after the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6) is evidence that enlarges and strengthens our assurance.

Assurance, action, and evidence influence each other in an ongoing process. This helix is like a coil, and as it spirals upward it expands and grows wider. These three elements of faith—assurance, action, and evidence—are not separate and discrete; rather, they are interrelated and continuous and cycle upward. And the faith that fuels this ongoing process develops and evolves and changes. As we again turn and face forward toward an uncertain future, assurance leads to action and produces evidence, which further increases assurance. Our confidence waxes stronger, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. We find a powerful example of the interaction among assurance, action, and evidence as the children of Israel transported the ark of the covenant under the leadership of Joshua (see Joshua 3:7–17). Recall how the Israelites came to the river Jordan and were promised the waters would part, or “stand upon an heap” (Joshua 3:13), and they would be able to cross over on dry ground. Interestingly, the waters did not part as the children of Israel stood on the banks of the river waiting for something to happen; rather, the soles of their feet were wet before the water parted. The faith of the Israelites was manifested in the fact that they walked into the water *before* it parted. They walked into the river Jordan with a future-facing assurance of things hoped for. As the Israelites moved forward, the water parted, and as they crossed over on dry land, they looked back and beheld the evidence of things not seen. In this episode, faith as assurance led to action and produced the evidence of things not seen which were true.

True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to action. Faith as the principle of action is highlighted in many scriptures with which we are all familiar:

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so *faith without works is dead* also” (James 2:26; italics added).

“But be ye *doers of the word*, and not hearers only” (James 1:22; italics added).

“But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an *experiment upon my words*, and exercise a particle of faith” (Alma 32:27; italics added).

And it is faith as the principle of action that is so central to the process of learning and applying spiritual truth.

Learning by Faith: To Act and Not to Be Acted Upon

How is faith as the principle of action in all intelligent beings related to gospel learning? And what does it mean to seek learning by faith?

In the grand division of all of God’s creations, there are things to act and things to be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:13–14). As sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we have been blessed with the gift of agency—the capacity and power of independent action. Endowed with agency, we are agents, and we primarily are to act and not only to be acted upon— especially as

we seek to obtain and apply spiritual knowledge.

Learning by faith and from experience are two of the central features of the Father’s plan of happiness. The Savior preserved moral agency through the Atonement and made it possible for us to act and to learn by faith. Lucifer’s rebellion against the plan sought to destroy the agency of man, and his intent was that we as learners would only be acted upon.

Consider the question posed by Heavenly Father to Adam in the Garden of Eden, “Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). Obviously the Father knew where Adam was hiding, but He, nonetheless, asked the question. Why? A wise and loving Father enabled His child to act in the learning process and not merely be acted upon. There was no one-way lecture to a disobedient child, as perhaps many of us might be inclined to deliver. Rather, the Father helped Adam as a learner to act as an agent and appropriately exercise his agency.

Recall how Nephi desired to know about the things his father, Lehi, had seen in the vision of the tree of life. Interestingly, the Spirit of the Lord begins the tutorial with Nephi by asking the following question, “Behold, what desirest thou?” (1 Nephi 11:2). Clearly the Spirit knew what Nephi desired. So why ask the question? The Holy Ghost was helping Nephi to act in the learning process and not simply be acted upon. (I encourage you at a later time to study chapters 11–14 in 1 Nephi and notice how the Spirit both asked questions and encouraged Nephi to “look” as active elements in the learning process.)

From these examples we recognize that as learners, you and I are to act and be doers of the word and not simply hearers who are only acted upon. Are you and I agents who act and seek learning by faith, or are we waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are the students we serve acting and seeking to learn by faith, or are they waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are you and I encouraging and helping those whom we serve to seek learning by faith? You and I and our students are to be anxiously engaged in asking, seeking, and knocking (see 3 Nephi 14:7).

A learner exercising agency by acting in accordance with correct principles opens his or her heart to the Holy Ghost—and invites His teaching, testifying power, and confirming witness. Learning by faith requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception. It is in the sincerity and consistency of our faith-inspired action that we indicate to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, our willingness to learn and receive instruction from the Holy Ghost. Thus, learning by faith involves the exercise of moral agency to act upon the assurance of things hoped for and invites the evidence of things not seen from the only true teacher, the Spirit of the Lord.

Consider how missionaries help investigators to learn by faith. Making and keeping spiritual commitments, such as studying and praying about the Book of Mormon, attending Church meetings, and keeping the commandments, require an investigator to exercise faith and to act. One of the fundamental roles of a missionary is to help an investigator make and honor commitments—to act and learn by faith. Teaching, exhorting, and explaining, as important as they are, can never convey to an investigator a witness of the truthfulness of the restored

gospel. Only as an investigator's faith initiates action and opens the pathway to the heart can the Holy Ghost deliver a confirming witness. Missionaries obviously must learn to teach by the power of the Spirit. Of equal importance, however, is the responsibility missionaries have to help investigators learn by faith.

The learning I am describing reaches far beyond mere cognitive comprehension and the retaining and recalling of information. The type of learning about which I am speaking causes us to put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19), to change our hearts (see Mosiah 5:2), and to be converted unto the Lord and to never fall away (see Alma 23:6). Learning by faith requires both "the heart and a willing mind" (D&C 64:34). Learning by faith is the result of the Holy Ghost carrying the power of the word of God both unto and into the heart. Learning by faith cannot be transferred from an instructor to a student through a lecture, a demonstration, or an experiential exercise; rather, a student must exercise faith and act in order to obtain the knowledge for himself or herself.

The young boy Joseph Smith instinctively understood what it meant to seek learning by faith. One of the most well-known episodes in the life of Joseph Smith was his reading of verses about prayer and faith in the book of James in the New Testament (see James 1:5–6). This text inspired Joseph to retire to a grove of trees near his home to pray and to seek for spiritual knowledge. Please note the questions Joseph had formulated in his mind and felt in his heart—and which he took into the grove. He clearly had prepared himself to "ask in faith" (James 1:6) and to act.

"In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? . . .

"My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right . . . and which I should join" (Joseph Smith—History 1:10, 18).

Notice that Joseph's questions focused not just on what he needed to know but also on what he needed to do. And his very first question centered on action and what was to be *done!* His prayer was not simply which church is right. His question was which church should he join. Joseph went to the grove to learn by faith. He was determined to act.

Ultimately, the responsibility to learn by faith and apply spiritual truth rests upon each of us individually. This is an increasingly serious and important responsibility in the world in which we do now and will yet live. What, how, and when we learn is supported by— but is not dependent upon—an instructor, a method of presentation, or a specific topic or lesson format.

Truly, one of the great challenges of mortality is to seek learning by faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith best summarizes the learning process and outcomes I am attempting to describe. In

response to a request by the Twelve Apostles for instruction, Joseph taught, “The best way to obtain truth and wisdom is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer, and obtain divine teaching” (*History of the Church*, 4:425).

And on another occasion, the Prophet Joseph explained that “reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God” (*History of the Church*, 6:50).

Implications for Us as Teachers

The truths about learning by faith we have discussed thus far have profound implications for us as teachers. Let us now consider together three of these implications.

Implication 1. The Holy Ghost is the only true teacher.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, and He is *the* teacher and witness of all truth. Elder James E. Talmage explained: “The office of the Holy Ghost in His ministrations among men is described in scripture. He is a teacher sent from the Father; and unto those who are entitled to His tuition He will reveal all things necessary for the soul’s advancement” (*The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 162).

We should always remember that the Holy Ghost is the teacher who, through proper invitation, can enter into a learner’s heart. Indeed, you and I have the responsibility to preach the gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter, as a prerequisite for the learning by faith that can be achieved only by and through the Holy Ghost (see D&C 50:14). In this regard, you and I are much like the long, thin strands of glass used to create the fiber-optic cables through which light signals are transmitted over very long distances. Just as the glass in these cables must be pure to conduct the light efficiently and effectively, so we should become and remain worthy conduits through whom the Spirit of the Lord can operate.

But brothers and sisters, we must be careful to remember in our service that we are conduits and channels; we are not the light. “For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:20). It is never about me and it is never about you. In fact, anything you or I do as an instructor that knowingly and intentionally draws attention to self—in the messages we present, in the methods we use, or in our personal demeanor—is a form of priestcraft that inhibits the teaching effectiveness of the Holy Ghost. “Doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God” (D&C 50:17–18).

Implication 2. We are most effective as instructors when we encourage and facilitate learning by faith.

We are all familiar with the adage that giving a man a fish feeds him for one meal. Teaching the man to fish, on the other hand, feeds him for a lifetime. As gospel instructors, you and I are not in the business of distributing fish; rather, our work is to help individuals learn to “fish” and to become spiritually self-reliant. This important objective is best accomplished as we encourage

and facilitate learners acting in accordance with correct principles—as we help them to learn by doing. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God” (John 7:17). Please notice this implication in practice in the counsel given to Junius F. Wells by Brigham Young as Brother Wells was called in 1875 to organize the young men of the Church:

“At your meetings you should begin at the top of the roll and call upon as many members as there is time for to bear their testimonies and at the next meeting begin where you left off and call upon others, so that all shall take part and get into the practice of standing up and saying something. Many may think they haven’t any testimony to bear, but get them to stand up and they will find the Lord will give them utterance to many truths they had not thought of before. More people have obtained a testimony while standing up trying to bear it than down on their knees praying for it” (in Junius F. Wells, “Historic Sketch of the YMMIA,” *Improvement Era*, June 1925, 715).

President Boyd K. Packer has given similar counsel in our day:

“Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be *found* in the *bearing* of it! Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that ‘leap of faith,’ as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two. ‘The spirit of man, ‘ as the scripture says, indeed ‘is the candle of the Lord.’ (Prov. 20:27.)

“It is one thing to receive a witness from what you have read or what another has said; and that is a necessary beginning. It is quite another to have the Spirit confirm to you in your bosom that what *you* have testified is true. Can you not see that it will be supplied as you share it? As you give that which you have, there is a replacement, with increase!” (*Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54–55).

I have observed a common characteristic among the instructors who have had the greatest influence in my life. They have helped me to seek learning by faith. They refused to give me easy answers to hard questions. In fact, they did not give me any answers at all. Rather, they pointed the way and helped me take the steps to find my own answers. I certainly did not always appreciate this approach, but experience has enabled me to understand that an answer given by another person usually is not remembered for very long, if remembered at all. But an answer we discover or obtain through the exercise of faith, typically, is retained for a lifetime. The most important learnings of life are caught—not taught.

The spiritual understanding you and I have been blessed to receive, and which has been confirmed as true in our hearts, simply cannot be given to another person. The tuition of diligence and learning by faith must be paid to obtain and personally “own” such knowledge. Only in this way can what is known in the mind be transformed into what is felt in the heart. Only in this way can a person move beyond relying upon the spiritual knowledge and experience of others and claim those blessings for himself or herself. Only in this way can we be spiritually prepared for what is coming. We are to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

Implication 3. An instructor’s faith is strengthened as he or she helps others seek learning by

faith.

The Holy Ghost, who can “teach [us] all things, and bring all things to [our] remembrance” (John 14:26), is eager to help us learn as we act and exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Interestingly, this divine learning assistance is perhaps never more apparent than when we are teaching, either at home or in Church assignments. As Paul made clear to the Romans, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Romans 2:21).

Please notice in the following verses from the Doctrine and Covenants how teaching diligently invites heavenly grace and instruction:

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

“Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend *you*, that *you* may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for *you* to understand” (D&C 88:77–78; italics added).

Consider that the blessings described in these scriptures are intended specifically for the teacher: “Teach . . . diligently and my grace shall attend you”—that you, the teacher, may be instructed!

The same principle is evident in verse 122 from the same section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not *all* be spokesmen 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 man may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122; italics added).

As all speak and as all listen in a dignified and orderly way, all are edified. The individual and collective exercise of faith in the Savior invites instruction and strength from the Spirit of the Lord.

Seek Learning by Faith: A Recent Example

All of us were blessed by the challenge from the First Presidency last August to read the Book of Mormon by the end of 2005. In extending the challenge, President Gordon B. Hinckley promised that faithfully observing this simple reading program would bring into our lives and into our homes “an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God” (“A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6).

Please note how this inspired challenge is a classic example of learning by faith. First, you and I were not commanded, coerced, or required to read. Rather, we were invited to exercise our agency as agents and act in accordance with correct principles. President Hinckley, as an inspired teacher, encouraged us to act and not just be acted upon. Each of us, ultimately, had to decide if and how we would respond to the challenge—and if we would endure to the end of

the task.

Second, in proffering the invitation to read and to act, President Hinckley was encouraging each of us to seek learning by faith. No new study materials were distributed to members of the Church, and no additional lessons, classes, or programs were created by the Church. Each of us had our copy of the Book of Mormon—and a pathway into our heart opened wider through the exercise of our faith in the Savior as we responded to the First Presidency challenge. Thus, we were prepared to receive instruction from the only true teacher, the Holy Ghost.

In recent weeks I have been greatly impressed by the testimonies of so many members concerning their recent experiences reading the Book of Mormon. Important and timely spiritual lessons have been learned, lives have been changed for the better, and the promised blessings have been received. The Book of Mormon, a willing heart, and the Holy Ghost—it really is that simple. My faith and the faith of the other Brethren have been strengthened as we have responded to President Hinckley's invitation and as we have observed so many of you acting and learning by faith.

As I stated earlier, the responsibility to seek learning by faith rests upon each of us individually, and this obligation will become increasingly important as the world in which we live grows more confused and troubled. Learning by faith is essential to our personal spiritual development and for the growth of the Church in these latter days. May each of us truly hunger and thirst after righteousness and be filled with the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 12:6)—that we might seek learning by faith.

I witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father. He is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that as we learn of Him, listen to His words, and walk in the meekness of His Spirit (see D&C 19:23), we will be blessed with spiritual strength, protection, and peace.

As a servant of the Lord, I invoke this blessing upon each of you: even that your desire and capacity to seek learning by faith—and to appropriately help others to seek learning by faith—will increase and improve. This blessing will be a source of great treasures of spiritual knowledge in your personal life, for your family, and to those whom you instruct and serve. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

© 2006 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved

“Dry Beans and Peas,” by Georgia Lauritzen, USU Extension, Publication No. FN 207.

“Beans,” Utah State University Extension publication from the Nutrition Education Program.

“Use It or Lose It. . . Dry Beans,” Chapter 11 of Utah State University Food Storage Cooking School publication.

“The Pioneer Woman”

“Doc Blue’s Emergency Medical Kit,” from www.avw.com.

“New Ideas for Cooking with Basic Food Storage,” from Church Welfare Department.

Provident-Living Challenges