

TEACHING THE GOSPEL

A HANDBOOK FOR CES TEACHERS AND LEADERS



THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
CHURCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

*T*EACHING THE *G*OSPEL

A HANDBOOK FOR CES TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Prepared by the
Church Educational System

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Church Educational System (CES) operates under the direction of the Board of Education of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and other General Authorities and general officers of the Church, are members of the Board of Education.

The Church Educational System provides religious education through seminary and institute of religion programs. It also operates Church universities and colleges (e.g., Brigham Young University and Ricks College) that offer both secular and religious education, as well as elementary and secondary schools in six countries.

In CES our task is not just education—it is religious education. Religious education is education for eternity and requires the influence of the Spirit of the Lord.

There are thousands of teachers and leaders throughout the world helping the youth of the Church learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and live according to its principles. Each of those teachers and leaders should understand certain aspects of the Church Educational System and its charge to provide religious education on a week-day basis. In this section four areas of focus will be discussed:

- RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
- CES AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH
- THE OBJECTIVE OF CES
- THE COMMISSION OF CES TEACHERS AND LEADERS

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education and secular education (education not oriented toward the spiritual) have much in common, but there are two very important differences. The first difference is in *what* is taught; the second is in *how* it is taught.

WHAT IS TAUGHT

Secular education strives to teach truth in many fields, such as mathematics, the sciences, and the arts. The Church has always taught the importance of education and learning in many fields, but in the Church the primary concern is to teach the saving principles of the gospel (see D&C 42:12–13; 88:78–79).

HOW IT IS TAUGHT

In religious education the Spirit must be present. The Lord stated it very simply: “If ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14; see also D&C 50:17–23; 100:8). President David O. McKay said, “After all, the technical learning is secondary, if we keep in mind the ultimate aim of the work. We must never lose sight of that. It is the Spirit which teaches the spirit” (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953], p. 219).

Gospel teaching has to do with edification. The Lord described effective teaching as teaching that edifies (see D&C 50:21–22; see also vv. 17–20). To edify means to build up spiritually or to bring one closer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Edifying teaching is one of the fundamental values of CES. While there are many principles of the gospel that lead to edification, there are seven that are particularly important in bringing about teaching that edifies.

- *The worth of a soul* (see D&C 18:10). Each person living on the earth is a spirit son or daughter of God

and has successfully kept his or her first estate (see Abraham 3:26). The worth of the individual soul is, in the final analysis, the reason behind all of God’s work and the entire plan of redemption.

- *The agency of others* (see D&C 101:78). Moral agency is the opportunity to choose between good

and evil according to one’s desires (see 2 Nephi 2:27). The Lord has given all mankind the gift of moral agency and lets them use that agency even though it may be used to choose evil. How people use their moral agency profoundly influences their conditions in this life and their eternal happiness and progress.

- *Relationships of trust* (see Proverbs 3:5). Trust in God comes from a knowledge of and faith in his nature and

attributes, which are all held in perfection. He cares perfectly for his children and seeks only their best good. Trust can fully develop between people when they acquire the attributes of godliness.

- *Growth through participation* (see Matthew 7:21; James 1:22). Part of God’s plan for his children is for them to actively participate in their own growth and development. Those who seek learning must put forth an effort to achieve it. Living the gospel requires diligence and commitment. The kind of participation the Lord requires involves the “heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2).

- *Vision* (see Proverbs 29:18). One of the most important aspects of edification is vision—having an eternal, spiritual perspective. A major effect of the influence of the Holy Spirit is increased vision, or seeing things more as God does (see Isaiah 55:8–9; Jacob 4:13). This deepened and broadened understanding then leads to a desire and a determination to become more like God.

President David O. McKay said, “After all, the technical learning is secondary, if we keep in mind the ultimate aim of the work. We must never lose sight of that. It is the Spirit which teaches the spirit.”

(Gospel Ideals [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953], p. 219.)

To edify means to build up spiritually or to bring one closer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

- *Unity* (see John 17:17–23). The Lord has said that he requires his people to be one, as he and his Father are one. The idea of unity is so crucial that Jesus also said, “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). Living gospel principles encourages a person to love the Lord and others and to try to be one with them.
- *An eye single to the glory of God* (see D&C 88:67–68). One of the end goals of the gospel is to so sanctify people that their “minds become single to

God.” Each successive experience in learning and living the gospel should strengthen one’s yearnings to accept God, to give all glory and honor to him, and to move further away from worldliness, selfishness, and sin.

If the principles of edification are violated by either teacher or student, the Spirit will be grieved and religious education, or gospel learning, will be lessened—perhaps even stopped altogether.

CES AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Our Heavenly Father has said that his mission, his purpose, his work, and his glory are “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Teaching the gospel is one of the most important ways of helping him accomplish his work.

The mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to help the Father in his great work by inviting all to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32; see also D&C 20:59). This mission has three aspects: proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead by performing vicarious ordinances of the gospel for them (see *Melchizedek Priesthood Handbook* [1990], p. 3).

The Church Educational System’s purpose is to help the Church accomplish its mission by providing religious education. All who are asked to teach and lead in CES become part of this great mission. Just as the Church has a statement of its mission, the Church Educational System has a statement of its objective.

This objective statement has been approved by the Church Board of Education and the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

THE OBJECTIVE

The objective of religious education in the Church Educational System is to assist the individual, the family, and priesthood leaders in accomplishing the mission of the Church by—

1. *Teaching students the gospel of Jesus Christ* as found in the standard works and the words of the prophets.
2. *Teaching students by precept and example* so they will be encouraged, assisted, and protected as they strive to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. *Providing a spiritual and social climate* where students can associate together.
4. *Preparing young people for effective Church service.*

In order to accomplish this objective, CES teachers and leaders are given a commission to do three important tasks—live the gospel, teach effectively, and administer appropriately.

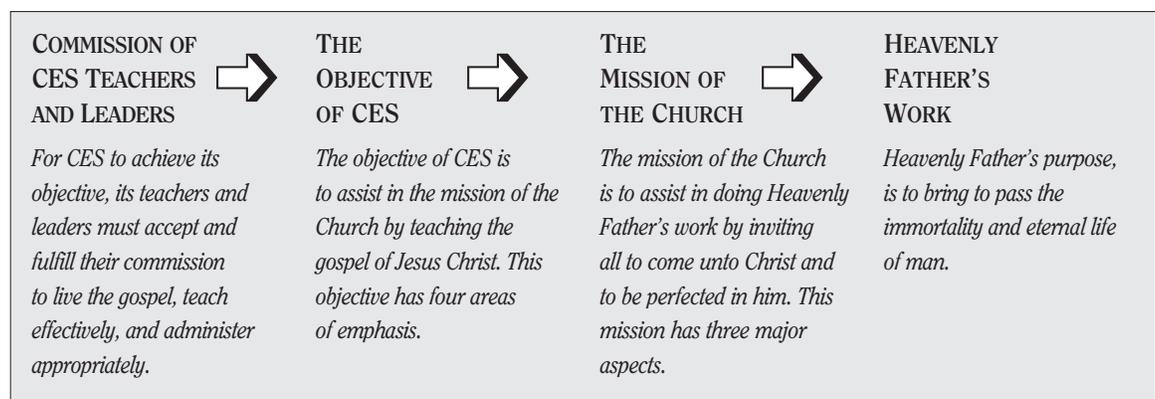
The diagram below illustrates how all of these work together to assist in doing the Lord’s work.

THE COMMISSION

The commission of teachers and leaders in the Church Educational System is to—

1. *Live* the gospel.
2. *Teach* effectively.
3. *Administer* appropriately.

When teachers and leaders earnestly strive to fulfill the objective and commission of CES, they are more likely to get the help they need from the Lord, from the Spirit, and from their associates in CES.



THE OBJECTIVE OF CES

TEACHING STUDENTS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

In 1938, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., speaking for the First Presidency, gave a landmark address to teachers in the Church Educational System. In that address he said: “Your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days. You are to teach this gospel, using as your sources and authorities the standard works of the Church and the words of those whom God has called to lead His people in these last days” (*The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, 1992 rev. ed. [address to religious educators, 8 Aug. 1938], p. 10; see also D&C 42:12–13).

“Your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days.”

—J. Reuben Clark, Jr.

Teaching the standard works is one of the primary activities of CES. And the curriculum

materials provided by CES, along with teaching the scriptures, contain many quotes from the General Authorities, with a particular emphasis on those who have been sustained as prophets in this last dispensation.

Part of the charge to teach the gospel is to teach only those principles and doctrines that are in harmony with what the scriptures and the Brethren teach. President Clark, in his address, continued: “You are not, whether high or low, to change the doctrines of the Church or to modify them as they are declared by and in the standard works of the Church and by those whose authority it is to declare the mind and will of the Lord to the Church” (*Charted Course*, p. 10).

An often repeated invitation from the Lord is for his children to come to him in an attitude of inquiry and seeking:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8; see also Isaiah 58:2; Luke 11:9; 3 Nephi 14:7; D&C 11:5; 46:9).

A major part of teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is teaching students this principle and encouraging them to use it throughout their lifetime.

TEACHING STUDENTS BY PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord taught that both precept and example are important in teaching the gospel:

“The elders, priests and teachers of this church shall *teach the principles* of my gospel. . . .

“And *they shall observe* the covenants and church articles *to do them*” (D&C 42:12–13; emphasis added).

To teach by precept means to teach the principles and the doctrines of the great plan of redemption, which make up the gospel of Jesus Christ. Part of the CES objective is to teach those precepts in such a way that students are influenced to strive to draw closer to Christ and to live the gospel more earnestly.

To teach by example means to live what we teach. While no one achieves full perfection in this life, teachers must exemplify the principles of the gospel in their own life or find that, as Alma said to his son, “When they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words” (Alma 39:11).

PROVIDING A SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL CLIMATE

Providing a spiritual and social climate has to do with creating a positive and uplifting setting where

students and teachers can learn, associate, and be edified together. It is important for seminary and institute classes to provide the youth and young adults the opportunity to associate with others who hold the same values and beliefs as their own. All students should be able to feel loved, trusted, valued, and safe in CES programs.

Though CES is primarily a religious education program and not an activity program, some activities that provide opportunities for social interaction are approved. The responsibility for providing social activities for the seminary-age youths lies with the family, the Aaronic Priesthood, and the Young Women. Seminaries are not to sponsor out-of-class activities except as approved by local CES administrators and on a very limited basis (such as an opening or closing social), and these should be oriented to service, friendship, gospel instruction, or increasing spirituality among the students.

The institutes of religion, working closely with and under the direction of local priesthood leaders, can take a more active role in sponsoring and assisting with social activities for the young adults in their area. Since young adults tend to court and marry within their own social groups, these activities fill an important

role for this age group, especially where the number of Latter-day Saints is more limited. Activities are sponsored through the institute of religion council, which has council members from various groups (both student and nonstudent) that represent the young adults in a local area.

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR EFFECTIVE CHURCH SERVICE

While teaching students the gospel there are many opportunities to show how men and women who love the Lord exemplify an attitude of service and to note the blessings that come through such

Seminary and institute classes should provide a spiritual haven where the mind and heart can focus for a time on the things of God and eternity and where students can feel the influence of the Spirit.

To teach by precept means to teach the principles and the doctrines.

To teach by example means to live what we teach.

service. In addition, especially in the institutes of religion, activities can be planned that focus on giving service both to the Church and to others in need. In both seminary and institute, students should

be encouraged and given opportunity to practice principles of service and fellowship outside of class as well as in it.

THE COMMISSION OF CES TEACHERS AND LEADERS

“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.”

—Boyd K. Packer

The commission of CES teachers and leaders describes those principles and values that, if held by a CES teacher or leader, will lead toward the successful achievement of the CES objective. The Church Educational System is based on and governed by principles of the gospel. When a person comes to believe in and care about a principle to the point it changes or directs his or her behavior, that principle becomes a *value*. Henry B.

Eyring, as Commissioner of the Church Educational System, said, “Values . . . come . . . from the inner workings of the Spirit as we live gospel principles. . . . As we get our values from the gospel of Jesus Christ rooted into our work, we are going to see excellence, and we’re going to see some marvelous things” (address to area directors, Mar. 1983).

The three parts of the commission are live the gospel, teach effectively, and administer appropriately.

LIVE THE GOSPEL

Every Latter-day Saint has made covenants with the Lord. Part of these covenants have to do with doing God’s work in his way and with his power so that Church members might become the saviors of men (see D&C 101:39–40; 103:9–10). Doing God’s work is the central value that lies behind any success a teacher has in teaching the gospel. Elder John A. Widtsoe said, “The Lord [the Father] proposed a plan [in premortal life]. . . . We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we became parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. . . . We

went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father’s work, and the Savior’s work, but also our work” (“The Worth of Souls,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1934, p. 189). As the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith, members of the Church should have “no other object in view . . . but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom” (Joseph Smith—History 1:46).

The core activity of CES is teaching, but, as the objective statement notes, this is done not only by precept but also by *example*. President Heber J. Grant said, “I ask every man and woman occupying a place of responsibility whose duty it

is to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to live it and keep the commandments of God, so that their example will teach it” (*Gospel Standards* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1969], p. 72).

Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “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” (*Teach Ye Diligently* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], p. 306). Living the gospel is part of a CES teacher’s or leader’s commission because it influences everything else he or she does.

Other values are also part of the commission to *live the gospel*.

Every Latter-day Saint has covenanted that he or she will learn and understand God’s word. This is

A desire to serve the Lord is a natural result of conversion. It is the central purpose of effective religious education.

“We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father’s work, and the Savior’s work, but also our work.”

—John A. Widtsoe

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Every Latter-day Saint has covenanted that he or she will learn and understand God's word.

Every Latter-day Saint has covenanted that he or she will strive to live in harmony with the Lord's will.

"Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness" (Moroni 10:32).

Working properly in partnership with priesthood leaders is one of the most critical functions teachers and leaders in CES have.

how people know his will for them. President Ezra Taft Benson said:

"Before you can strengthen your students, it is essential that you study the doctrines of the kingdom and learn the gospel by *both* study and faith. . . .

"The sequence to possessing the power of God in your teaching is to seek first to obtain the word; then comes understanding and the Spirit, and finally the power to convince" (*The Gospel Teacher and His Message* [address to religious educators, 17 Sept. 1976], pp. 4–5).

Every Latter-day Saint has covenanted that he or she will strive to live in harmony with the Lord's will. This is more than outward obedience. It means that one has a sincere desire to know and please Heavenly Father. It means having integrity in all one's labors and relationships (see Job 27:1–6; Alma 53:20). And part of striving for that is a desire to constantly keep moving toward perfection. Moroni gave us the key for achieving this perfection when he said, "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; . . . 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" (Moroni 10:32).

These values—doing the Lord's work, understanding his word, living in harmony with his will, and striving for perfection—are all part of the CES teacher's and leader's commission to live the gospel.

These values—doing the Lord's work, understanding his word, living in harmony with his will, and striving for perfection—are all part of the CES teacher's and leader's commission to live the gospel.

TEACH EFFECTIVELY

This handbook discusses effective teaching in great detail, so more will not be said at this point.

ADMINISTER APPROPRIATELY

Teaching is the primary purpose of the Church Educational System, but there are other tasks that

must also be done if the objective of CES is to be accomplished. Budgets must be planned, reports completed, and facilities obtained and maintained.

One of the gospel principles, or values, important to CES is that of servant leadership. A teacher is a leader of youth. Many CES teachers are also asked to lead and train other teachers. Jesus taught that leadership is service to those one leads. He said:

"Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

"And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26–27).

King Benjamin taught that when we serve others we serve God (see Mosiah 2:17).

The following are some of the administrative principles that are part of being a CES teacher and leader:

1. *Establish and maintain good relationships with priesthood leaders.* It is part of the Lord's pattern in the Church that all programs and functions are accomplished under the direction of the priesthood. This is true of the Church Educational System. CES is directed by the Board of Education, which consists of members of the General Authorities, as well as other general officers of the Church, including the general presidents of the Relief Society and the Young Women organizations.

But there are some differences between CES and other Church organizations. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have determined that week-day religious education should be administered under the direction of full-time, professional religious educators. In areas where released-time seminary programs exist, many of the teachers are full-time CES employees. In areas where teachers are called on a volunteer basis, the teachers are supervised by full-time CES coordinators and area

Part of the commission to administer appropriately is to know, accept, and follow those policies and procedures CES sets to comply with the laws of the countries in which it operates.

directors. These professionals are employed by the Church to provide week-day religious education.

CES teachers and leaders have no ecclesiastical authority. They cannot, by virtue of their position in CES, take over priesthood functions, such as determining worthiness and administering Church discipline. This delicate balance between a supporting educational organization and the ecclesiastical priesthood line is an important partnership. Working properly in that partnership is one of the most critical functions teachers and leaders in CES have. The First Presidency has clearly defined the responsibilities and duties of both lines.

Local CES teachers and leaders, under the direction of the Board of Education and the CES Administrator, have the responsibility to—

- Work closely with local priesthood leaders to see that religious education programs are functioning properly in the local area and that the youth and young adults are enrolled in seminary and institute classes and are taught properly.
- Report enrollment and completion information to the appropriate priesthood leaders.
- Budget for and pay the costs of seminary and institute programs, including CES buildings, curriculum materials, and needed equipment.
- Appoint volunteer CES teachers, after local priesthood leaders have certified them as being worthy and available to teach in CES, as well as to release them.
- Provide in-service training for other CES teachers and leaders.
- Certify which students have met the requirements for graduation and to plan and carry out graduation exercises under the direction of the local priesthood leaders.

“Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister” (Matthew 20:26).

Local priesthood leaders have the responsibility to—

- Identify all youth and young adults eligible for seminary or institute of religion programs.
- Take an active role in seeing that all youth and young adults are enrolled in CES programs.
- Certify the worthiness of those asked to be CES teachers and leaders.
- Certify the worthiness of students to graduate from seminary or institute.

- Preside at graduation exercises.
- Support religious education and encourage other priesthood and auxiliary leaders to do the same.

2. Follow established policies and procedures. The Church Educational System, under the direction of the Church Board of Education, has established guidelines that help teachers and leaders fulfill the CES objective. As an educational system and an employer, CES sets policies and procedures to comply with the laws of the countries in which it operates. Part of the commission to administer appropriately is to know, accept, and follow those policies and procedures.

3. Grade student performance. Teachers are asked to provide grades showing how students performed. These are recorded and kept in a permanent student record. Letter or numerical grades can be used, following local patterns. It is against CES policy to give a failing grade in seminary. Students who do not meet the performance requirements should be given an “I” or “Incomplete” grade. An incomplete can be made up and changed any time before graduation, not just during the year in which the course was taken. Students should be assisted in meeting the requirements so they can receive credit. (*Note:* CES policy states that in order to receive credit, students

Enrollment information is helpful to teachers as they work with their students and is also used by CES to plan for the future needs of teachers and students, to measure performance, and to budget necessary funds.

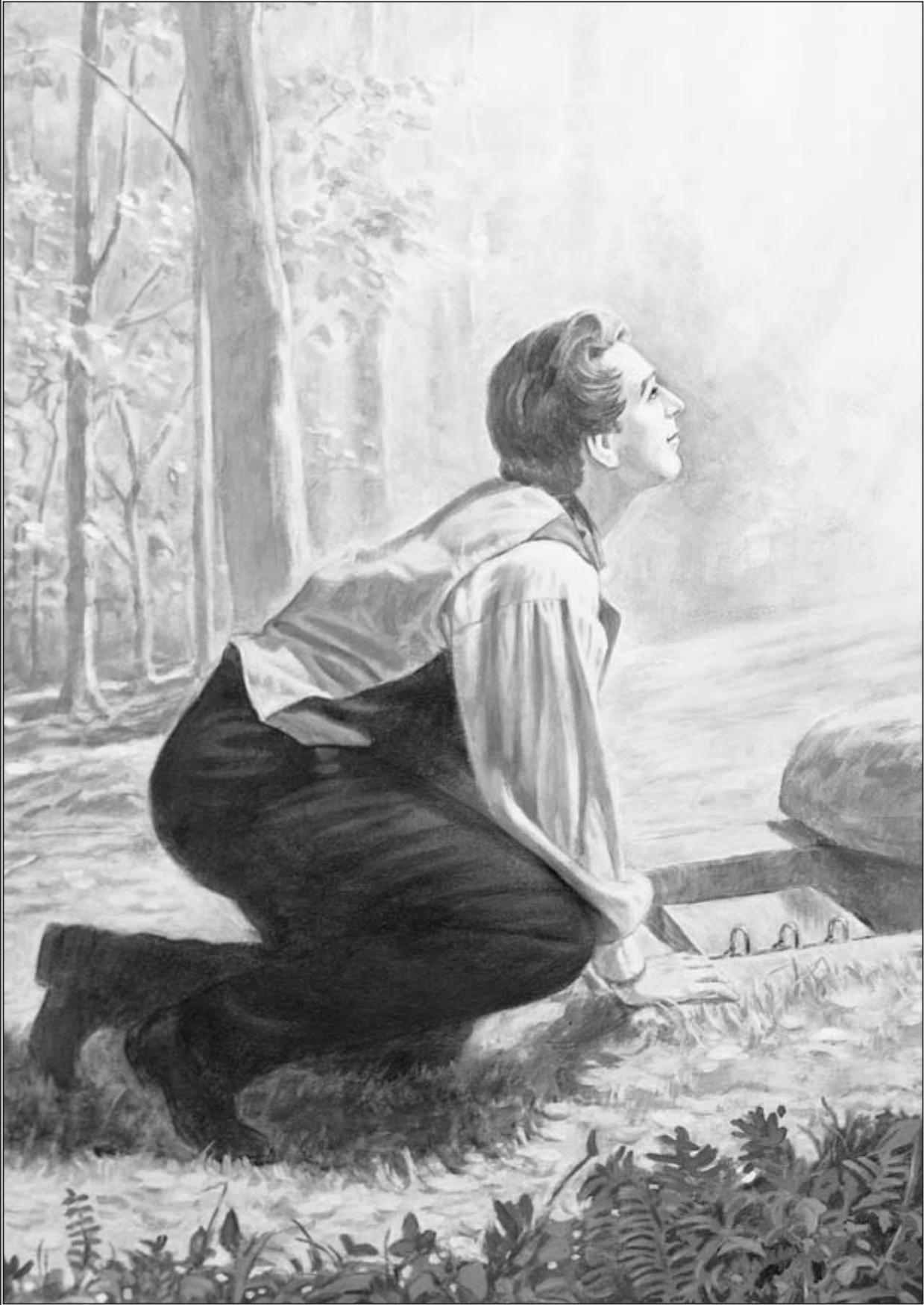
must attend 80 percent of the time or, in released-time settings, the same percentage as required by the adjacent public school.) Grades should not be used as a means for coercing or pressuring students to conform. Reading the scriptures outside of class in daily programs can be part of a student's grade, but credit for seminary cannot be withheld if this requirement is not met.

Most institute of religion classes are transferable to Church colleges and universities for credit if they were taken for a letter grade. Students may elect to take pass/fail grades in institute classes, but should clearly understand that if they do so the classes are not transferable. This decision must be made at the beginning of the class. Pass/fail grades cannot be changed after the class is completed.

4. *Complete reports accurately and on time.* CES teachers and leaders are asked to keep a record of the enrollment and attendance of students. This

information, as well as other administrative information, is reported to their supervisors. This information is helpful to teachers as they work with their students. It is also used by CES to plan for the future needs of teachers and students, to measure performance, and to budget necessary funds. These reports should be completed accurately and submitted to the appropriate CES leader on time.

5. *Take proper care of Church property and resources.* Teachers and leaders in the Church Educational System are entrusted with the property and resources of the Church, such as buildings, budgets, equipment, supplies, and curriculum materials. These are paid for by the sacred tithes of the Church. Each CES employee and volunteer has an obligation to use and take proper care of these resources. Students also should be taught to respect and care for the property and resources of the Church.



GOSPEL LEARNING

Gospel learning, or religious education, could be defined as the process through which, with the influence of the Holy Ghost, a person acquires gospel knowledge, chooses how to respond to that knowledge, and uses that knowledge in his or her own life. If a person makes right choices about how to respond to and use gospel knowledge, he or she will be blessed and edified.

Edification takes place when a person grows spiritually and becomes more like Christ. This is what is meant by religious education or gospel learning. In this section, two areas of focus will be examined:

- THE ROLE OF THE HOLY GHOST IN GOSPEL LEARNING
- THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT IN GOSPEL LEARNING

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY GHOST IN GOSPEL LEARNING

No man or woman, no matter how righteous or faithful, can fulfill the functions of the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead. He acts under the direction of the Father and the Son to teach, testify, reveal, guide, enlighten, comfort, and sanctify the hearts of the children of men. No man or woman, no matter how righteous or faithful, can fulfill these functions of the Spirit. Occasionally, teachers say things like “I must give my students a spiritual experience” or “How can I make my students more spiritual?” A teacher may do many things that can influence whether or not the Spirit will be present, but he or she cannot fulfill his role. It is the Holy Spirit that “carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).

The importance of a teacher having the Spirit during lesson preparation and presentation cannot be overstated. The Lord even went so far as to say that “if ye receive not the Spirit *ye shall not teach*” (D&C 42:14; emphasis added). Though the various methods and skills of teaching are important, a teacher can master many of these and still fail to provide an edifying learning experience if the Spirit is not present.

TEACHING BY THE SPIRIT

As noted, the Lord said that if a person receives not the Spirit, he or she shall not teach (see D&C 42:13–14), but what does it mean to teach by the Spirit? Will a teacher always know if he or she is teaching by the Spirit? Will students know? What will students be experiencing if the Spirit is present? What constitutes a true spiritual experience for a person? Questions about teaching by the Spirit can be difficult to answer.

For purposes of this discussion, teaching by the Spirit is defined as taking place when the Holy Ghost is performing his role or functions with the teacher, with the student, or with both. This can happen during

lesson preparation and lesson presentation. It can happen as teachers interact with students outside of class, or even while teachers are just thinking how best to help their students. In some cases, the Spirit may touch a student’s mind or heart long after class is over.

THE ROLE OR FUNCTIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST

The following are some of the functions of the Holy Ghost that are directly related to gospel teaching and learning:

The most important thing a teacher can do to have the Spirit is to live the gospel and then to seek the influence of the Holy Ghost through the prayer of faith (see D&C 42:14).

- He shows a person what to do (see 2 Nephi 32:5; D&C 28:15; 39:6).
- He bestows the “fruits of the Spirit,” which include such things as joy, love, peace, patience, and gentleness (see Galatians 5:22–23; Romans 15:13; D&C 6:23; 11:12–13).
- He gives the “gifts” of the Spirit (see Moroni 10:8–17; D&C 46:11–26).
- He allows a person to speak with authority and boldness (see 1 Nephi 10:22; Alma 18:35; Moroni 8:16).
- He testifies to the truthfulness of God and other gospel principles (see John 15:26; D&C 21:9; 100:8).
- He helps us discern the thoughts or intents of others (see Alma 12:3; 18:16, 20, 32, 35; D&C 63:41).
- He gives us truth, knowledge, insights, understanding, and enlightenment (see John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:9–11, 14; D&C 6:14; 11:13–14; 76:5–10, 116).
- He can bring ideas, concepts, or principles back to remembrance (see John 14:26).
- He can inspire a person in what to say in the very hour it is needed (see Luke 12:11–12; D&C 84:85; 100:5–6).

Teaching by the Spirit is defined as taking place when the Holy Ghost is performing his role or functions with the teacher, with the student, or with both.

- He brings sanctification and remission of sins (see Alma 13:12; 2 Nephi 31:17; 3 Nephi 27:20; D&C 19:31).
- He can carry truth to the hearts of people and soften them (see 1 Nephi 2:16; 2 Nephi 33:1; Alma 24:8).
- He can enhance a person’s skills and abilities to perform a task (see Exodus 31:3–5; 1 Nephi 18:1–4; D&C 46:18).
- He sometimes either constrains (impels forward) or restrains (holds back) (see 1 Nephi 7:15; 2 Nephi 28:1; 32:7; Alma 14:11; Mormon 3:16).
- He edifies (lifts or builds spiritually) both the teacher and the student (see 1 Corinthians 14:12; D&C 50:22–23; 84:106).
- As one of his titles implies, he gives comfort (see John 14:26; D&C 88:3).

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT IN GOSPEL LEARNING

Participation is one of the principles of edification.

Sometimes students come to the learning setting thinking that the responsibility for their learning rests only with the teacher. They want to sit passively and have education “happen” to them. This cannot be. Participation is one of the principles of edification (see “How It Is Taught,” p. 2).

One person cannot learn a gospel principle for another. The scriptures tell us that each person must “work out [his or her] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Parents cannot live the gospel for their children. Each person has a responsibility for his or her own gospel learning and living, and each will ultimately be judged by how they fulfill that responsibility.

Teachers can help students accept their role in learning. One way to do this is for teachers to stay focused on the learner and not just on teaching. The difference between focusing on the learner and focusing on teaching or on the teacher is illustrated by the difference in a teacher who says, “What shall I do in class today?” and one who says, “What will my students do in class today?” or “What will I teach today?” and “How will I help my students discover what they need to know?”

There are conditions that, if present in the learner, will greatly enhance gospel learning. These conditions are learner readiness, learner participation, and learner

application. They are part of the learner’s responsibility. But a teacher can help *stimulate* readiness, *maintain* participation, and *aid* application.

Note: “Learner participation” was formerly called “learner involvement.” Because the word *involvement* sometimes carries a negative connotation of entanglement (such as “being involved with drugs”), it was felt that *participation* better represented the desired quality in the learner.

LEARNER READINESS

Learning is enhanced when a state of readiness exists in the students.

Readiness is a condition of the heart as well as the mind. The primary difference between Nephi and his older brothers was the softness or hardness of their hearts (see 1 Nephi 2:16, 19; 17:19), and this comes from the influence of the Holy Ghost. Students are also ready to learn when their minds are alert, their attention is focused

on the learning experiences, and they are willing to participate in learning.

A teacher can do things that enhance the state of readiness, but this effort is much broader than the teaching methods. Students who know they are loved, respected, and trusted by their teacher are

Each person has a responsibility for his or her own gospel learning and living, and each will ultimately be judged by how they fulfill that responsibility.

Readiness is a condition of the heart as well as the mind.

most likely to come to class ready to learn. When students know that their teacher consistently prepares and presents lessons that are interesting, enjoyable, and relevant, they will also be more likely ready to learn. Most importantly, a teacher needs to remember that it is the Holy Spirit that creates true readiness to learn the gospel. If the teacher is not seeking ways to create the proper spiritual environment and state of readiness, all other techniques and methods will eventually fail in achieving the goal of religious education.

A common mistake teachers make concerning learner readiness is thinking that they only need to be concerned about readiness at the beginning of class. The attention span of students is limited. Readiness to learn rises and falls during each class period. The wise teacher looks for ways to rekindle interest and enthusiasm several times during the class. That is especially important when class periods are held for more than forty or fifty minutes.

LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Learner participation takes place when a student willingly and actively participates in the class. This participation can be physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

Learner participation takes place when a student willingly and actively participates in the class. This participation can be physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. This latter dimension, the spiritual dimension, cannot be stressed too heavily. By definition, religious education requires the Holy Ghost, or edification will not occur. Teachers may have students actively participating in learning activities that do not bring the Spirit or help the Spirit to bear witness to their hearts. Then participation becomes merely another “technique” and not a means to help achieve edification.

Students who participate by talking with the teacher and each other about the gospel—discussing

an issue, telling what they think, answering questions, and so on—are more apt to learn. Since one of the primary functions in CES is to teach the scriptures, students should be active participants in scripture study both in and out of class. Students can participate by interacting with the scriptures in many ways—reading, pondering, looking, finding, and writing.

LEARNER APPLICATION

If knowledge of a gospel principle is learned but not acted upon or applied, the learning is not complete and the Spirit may cease to strive with the individual (see D&C 1:33). Application takes place when a

student accepts in his heart and mind what is taught and then acts and lives according to those principles.

Readiness, participation, and application interact with each other. When a readiness to learn is present, getting students to participate in learning will be much easier. And a teaching method that keeps students actively and productively engaged in learning naturally rekindles their readiness and aids in making application. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said, “The more class members read their scriptural reading assignments, the more they bring their scriptures to class, and the more they discuss what the

gospel actually means in their lives, the more will be their inspiration, growth, and joy as they try to solve their personal concerns and challenges” (“Teaching by the Spirit: A Conversation with Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin and Elder Gene R. Cook,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1989, p. 15).

The following are some principles that show how a teacher can help stimulate readiness, maintain participation, and aid application:

One Latter-day Saint writer noted that “the learning has to be done by the pupil. Therefore it is the pupil who has to be put into action. When a teacher takes the spotlight, becomes the star of the show, does all the talking, and otherwise takes over all of the activity, it is almost certain that he is interfering with the learning of the class members.”

(Asahel D. Woodruff, *Teaching the Gospel*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1961], p. 37.)

Application takes place when a student accepts in his heart and mind what is taught and then acts and lives according to those principles.

- Students will more likely feel the Spirit during gospel learning when principles of edification are followed (see “How It Is Taught,” p. 2). Having the Spirit creates readiness and helps students see how to make application.
- Conditions of readiness, participation, and application will more likely be present when students are invited to share how they feel about the class (in writing or directly) and to make suggestions for improving their learning experience.
- When students are bored, they are not ready to learn. Student boredom often occurs when students are not actively participating in the learning process or when learning activities are done the same way most of the time. Changing teaching approaches and methods can help stimulate student readiness and maintain learner participation throughout the lesson.
- Teaching methods or learning activities that require students to use more than one of the senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling) can help improve learner participation.
- Calling student leaders to assist in organizing learning experiences, conducting the business of the class, planning activities, or maintaining the proper atmosphere for learning is an important way to achieve learner participation.
- Students will more likely stay ready to learn, want to participate in learning, and be willing to apply gospel principles when they see the relevance of what they are studying to their own lives and when they experience the motivating, enlightening, revealing, and testifying influence of the Holy Ghost.

Elder Boyd K. Packer wrote: “One teacher had a ‘so what’ test that he used in preparing each lesson. He would imagine in his mind one of his students saying, ‘So what?’ Then he would find some explanation as to why the teaching or the lesson was pertinent to the here and now. It changed both his preparation and his presentation.”

(Teach Ye Diligently, p. 121.)

- Students are more likely to be ready to learn and to stay involved in the learning process when they are given a problem, a question, or a task that is challenging and stimulating.

- One way to help students participate spiritually in the lessons and to encourage them to apply and deepen their understanding of what they are learning is to give

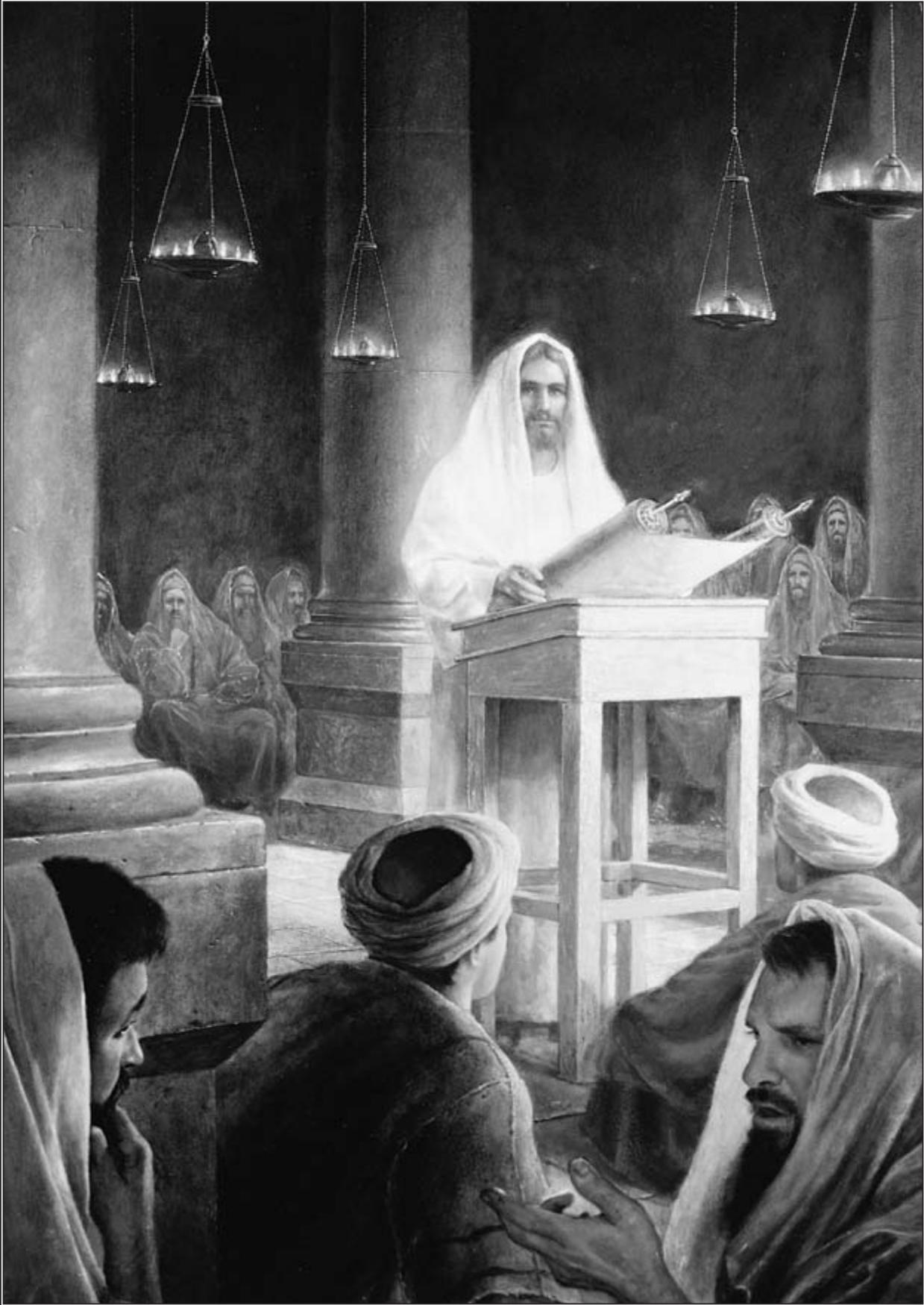
them time in class to meditate on and ponder about what they have learned. At such times, teachers should encourage students to ask for help from the Lord.

- If they are shown positive examples, students will more easily understand how gospel principles can be applied in their own lives.
- Students better understand how gospel principles can be applied when they hear the teacher or other students bear testimony of the value of those principles.
- Students will generally enjoy learning more when learning activities are appropriate to their interests and abilities.

- Students will be more likely to feel the Spirit and to learn the gospel if they feel the teacher radiating a pure love of Christ for them.

- Students will be more likely to feel the Spirit and to learn the gospel when they are taught they are of infinite worth to their Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Note: Many teachers will have students in their classes who have limited abilities or physical or mental handicaps. These too are children of Heavenly Father and need to learn the gospel. Teachers need to be especially sensitive to such students and tailor the religious education experience to their needs and abilities.



GOSPEL TEACHING: THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

In religious education, the role of the teacher is very important. Teachers cannot fulfill the functions of the Holy Ghost, nor can they take away the student's responsibility for learning, but they can have a profound influence on how students interact with the Holy Spirit and with each other. A teacher can prepare and teach with the prayer of faith (see D&C 42:14). A teacher can practice the principles of edification and create a relationship where students feel trusted and loved and want to learn more about the gospel. A teacher can teach, explain, clarify, illustrate, and exhort so that students can more clearly understand gospel principles. And, perhaps most importantly, a teacher can testify of his or her own love for Heavenly Father, his Son, and for the students. A teacher can testify of the value of gospel principles in daily life. By such personal example, teachers can help students see that the gospel can bless their lives.

Those blessed to have been taught by a great teacher understand just how important a teacher's role can be in learning the gospel. Teaching is not only at the heart of the Church Educational System, it is also at the heart of the mission of the Church. President Spencer W. Kimball taught, "We all need to be touched and nurtured by the Spirit, and effective teaching is one of the most important ways this can happen" (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 524).

President Ezra Taft Benson also noted, "The teaching of the word then is the answer to the redemption of souls. This is what we are about today" (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 312).

The following are important aspects of a teacher's role:

- PREPARE YOURSELF
- DECIDE *What* TO TEACH AND *How* TO TEACH IT
- ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN AN APPROPRIATE SETTING FOR LEARNING

PREPARE YOURSELF

The most important and fundamental part of a gospel teacher's preparation is to prepare himself or herself spiritually in order to set a proper example.

The most important and fundamental part of a gospel teacher's preparation is to prepare himself or herself spiritually in order to set a proper example. Four important considerations in such preparation are to live the gospel, pray, participate in in-service training, and have faith.

LIVE THE GOSPEL

The first part of the commission given to CES teachers and leaders is to *live the gospel*. Since this was discussed earlier in the section on the commission (see "The Commission of CES Teachers and Leaders," p. 6), more will not be said here except to note this simple chain of reasoning: Gospel learning requires the Spirit. The Spirit comes to those who seek for it and are worthy. To be worthy one must live the gospel.

"And now, as 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, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God" (Alma 30:5).

PRAY

Part of preparation is prayer (see D&C 42:14; 104:79, 82). A teacher should pray for the Spirit as lesson preparation begins, for help at the beginning of each class, for the gift of discernment to better understand each student, for the gift of charity for those students who may be more difficult to love, for the Spirit's help in understanding gospel principles, and for wisdom in deciding how to best teach those principles.

CES is organized to provide the help and training teachers and leaders need to succeed. Preservice and in-service meetings are available in most areas. Curriculum is available for both seminary and institute courses. There are other training resources in addition to this book. Participation in training opportunities will further a persons's growth as an edifying teacher and leader.

PARTICIPATE IN IN-SERVICE TRAINING

CES provides extensive in-service training opportunities for all of its teachers and leaders. The primary purpose of in-service training is to improve teaching, but it also helps teachers learn how to minister and administer as a servant leader in CES. Training meetings are used to discuss the scriptures,

to learn and practice inspiring methods of teaching, to distribute materials, to help teachers complete reports, to share ideas for increasing student attendance and participation, for helping students complete course requirements, and so on.

HAVE FAITH

In the gospel, faith is a principle of power (see *Lectures on Faith* 1:15–17). It is a principle of power in religious education as well, and teachers will not succeed without it. Some areas where faith is particularly important are the following:

- *Faith in the Lord and in the Spirit.* The assignment to teach

the principles of the gospel to the youth and young adults with the help of the Spirit can feel challenging and overwhelming. But it is the Lord's work, and he will help those who turn to him in faith to succeed. 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). And in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord promised,

“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).

“You do not have to sneak up behind a spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in his ears.”
—J. Reuben Clark, Jr.

“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).

- *Faith in the power of the word.* 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. The scriptures contain “the words of life” (D&C 84:85). The prophet Alma said that the word 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” (2 Nephi 32:3). The scriptures can give the youth the power to resist the “fiery darts of the adversary” (1 Nephi 15:24) and help them become “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17).

- *Faith in the students.* President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., described some characteristics of the students in seminaries and institutes of religion. He said:

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

“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” (*Charted Course*, pp. 3, 9).

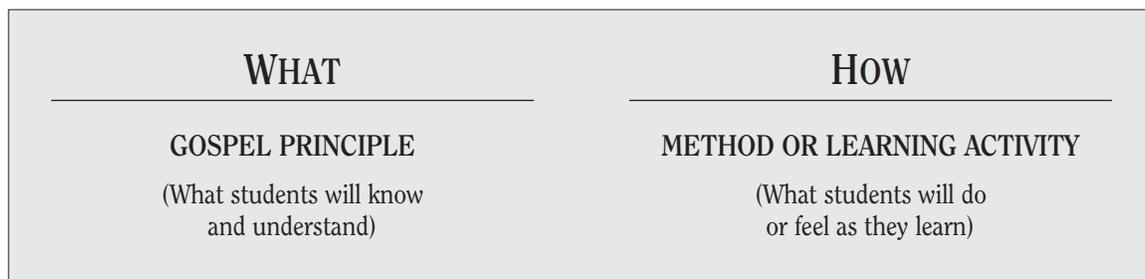
Most students have made covenants with the Lord and want to please him. Many have been born under the covenant, which carries unique blessings and promises that affect their readiness to learn the gospel.

President David O. McKay said, “Teachers, begin the preparation of your lessons in prayer. Teach your lessons with a prayerful heart. Then pray that God will enrich your message in the souls of your children through the influence of his Holy Spirit.”
(Gospel Ideals, p. 223.)

DECIDE *WHAT* TO TEACH AND *HOW* TO TEACH IT

Every teacher has two decisions to make when preparing a lesson: “*What* will I teach?” and “*How* will I teach it?” The “*what*” to teach is the *content* of the lesson. This can be doctrines, principles, concepts, scriptural insights, historical context, or the like. The “*how*” to teach is the *methods*, the

approaches and learning activities a teacher uses to help students learn the content. These methods may include such activities as discussion, audiovisual resources, writing exercises, and small group work. The “*what*” and the “*how*” of teaching can be illustrated as in the diagram below:



What to teach and how to teach it are two aspects of teaching that need to be kept in balance. If one is emphasized over the other, edifying teaching will most likely be lessened. If the “what” gets most of the emphasis, lessons can become boring and too teacher-centered. On the other hand, if the “how” gets out of balance, lessons can become unfocused or disjointed. Deciding what to teach needs to precede choosing how to teach it.

Scripture study is not only important for a teacher's own personal spiritual growth, but it is directly related to his or her effectiveness in teaching the gospel.

SEQUENTIAL SCRIPTURE TEACHING

Before discussing the specifics of deciding what and how to teach, it would be well to note that in the CES objective statement the first area of emphasis is “teaching students the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the standard works and the words of the prophets” (see chart, p. 3). In response to that charge, CES has determined that its primary emphasis will be to teach the scriptures. All of the courses in seminary, and most of the courses in the institutes of religion, are scripture courses.

The CES administration has determined that in the CES weekday setting, where more time is available for instruction, the scriptures should be taught in a sequential manner. One of the best ways to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ is to teach the scriptures sequentially. *Sequential scripture teaching* is teaching the scriptures in the sequence they appear in the standard works. For example, when teaching the Book of Mormon, the course begins with 1 Nephi and continues book-by-book through to Moroni.

Sequential scripture teaching generally means—

- The lesson for a class period focuses on a block of scripture rather than on one concept or principle. This block can be as little as one chapter (or section) or as much as an entire book.

- The books and chapters are taught in the same sequence they appear in the scriptures. There may be a few exceptions to this—for example, in seminary, the study of the Old Testament may skip some of the lesser-known books (such as Obadiah or Habakkuk) because of time limitations.

- There are usually multiple concepts or principles that are important for students to learn in a scripture block.

- The teacher tries to help students understand the message the Lord inspired the original writer to give in a particular block.

Sequential scripture teaching *DOES NOT* mean—

- Teaching every chapter and verse with equal time and emphasis.
- Every verse in a chapter or section must be taught in the exact order it appears.
- A teacher reads a verse then comments on it, then reads another verse and comments on it, and so on.
- Abandoning other methods of effective teaching. Stories, illustrations, group work, writing exercises, audiovisual materials, and other uplifting

teaching methods will be as important, if not more so, in sequential scripture teaching.

DECIDE THE “WHAT”

There are three fundamental activities teachers do as they determine what they will teach. These are:

1. *Master the content.* Before teachers start their lesson preparation, they should gather their scriptures, the CES curriculum, and other approved resource materials that will assist them in teaching

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “If you want to know what emphasis should be given to gospel principles, you simply teach the whole standard works and, automatically, in the process, you will have given the Lord’s emphasis to every doctrine and every principle.”

(The Foolishness of Teaching [address to religious educators, 18 Sept. 1981], p. 6.)

The power of three readings:

1. Read quickly for understanding.
2. Read again for principles.
3. Review for additional insights.

“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?’”

—Ezra Taft Benson

the gospel. The primary resource, of course, is the scriptures. CES-prepared curriculum materials also provide background information about the scriptures, explanations of difficult words and phrases, General Authority comments on the doctrine and principles taught in the scriptures, and suggestions for what principles and events to teach from the scriptures and how to teach them.

Teachers may use other appropriate resources to improve teaching. These might include a dictionary, Church magazines, books written by General Authorities, objects, pictures, the *Church News* (where available), and other newspaper articles. *However, these resources should not be used to speculate, sensationalize, or teach ideas that have not been clearly established by the Church.*

After the resources are gathered, the teacher needs to master the content to be taught. This is best done by first earnestly seeking the influence of the Spirit and then by immersing oneself in the content. If it is a scripture block to be taught, the teacher needs to immerse himself or herself in that block until it becomes completely familiar.

Understanding the word of God is one of the underlying values in the Church Educational System. Scripture study is not only important for a teacher’s own personal spiritual growth, but it is directly related to his or her effectiveness in teaching the gospel.

Simply reading the scriptures is not enough. President Ezra Taft Benson said: “Let us not treat lightly the great things we have received from the

hand of the Lord! His word is one of the most valuable gifts He has given us. I urge you to recommit yourselves to a study of the scriptures. Immerse yourselves in them daily so that you will have the power of the Spirit to attend you in your callings” (“The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82). To immerse oneself in the scriptures means to study, ponder, and pray for inspiration about what one reads. It means to read them more than once.

Many teachers have found power in reading the scripture block three times: First, they quickly read the scripture block for an understanding of what the chapters contain and what the prophetic writer felt was important. The chapter or section summaries found in many versions of the scriptures may be helpful in doing this. Then they read the block a second time, this time more slowly and carefully. They look for principles or concepts their students will have difficulty understanding. They pray for help in understanding what they read. They note such things as principles, doctrines, events, and cause-and-effect

relationships that seem important. They read or review the block a third time and look for additional insights, word or concept patterns, or relationships missed in previous readings that would be important for the students.

Note the verbs that the scriptures use in telling how to study the word of the Lord (emphases added):

- *“Thou shalt meditate therein [on the book of the law]” (Joshua 1:8).*
- *“Feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3).*
- *“Search them diligently” (Mosiah 1:7).*
- *“Lay hold upon the word of God” (Helaman 3:29).*
- *“Ponder upon the things which I have said” (3 Nephi 17:3).*
- *“Study my word” (D&C 11:22).*
- *“Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life” (D&C 84:85).*

2. Decide what is important for students to know.

In a normal scripture block there will be several gospel principles or concepts. Three considerations help a teacher decide which are the most important for students:

- *The intent of the inspired writer.* President Ezra Taft Benson said: “If they [the writers] 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?’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 6). This principle is true for all the standard works.

- *The needs and abilities of students.* As they study a scripture block, teachers may find ideas or concepts that are personally exciting or of particular personal significance. But these may be beyond the spiritual readiness and understanding of their students (see, for example, Paul’s “meat and milk” counsel in 1 Corinthians 3:2). Some principles that are no longer new or relevant to the teachers may still be especially relevant to the students. While teachers usually learn more than their students, they need to remember that they are teaching students, not just lessons. They are creating a learning experience and not just preparing lesson outlines.

Even the best method will not bring about religious education if the Spirit is not present.

In Alma’s day, the ideal teacher/learner relationship was described in this manner: “The priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal” (Alma 1:26).

- *The Spirit.* The Spirit, of course, is the most important thing. The Spirit will help teachers better understand both their students’ needs and the intent of the inspired scripture writer. The Lord said, “And the Spirit shall be given unto you

by the prayer of faith” (D&C 42:14). As noted earlier, teachers should start their scripture study and lesson preparation with a prayer. And one thing teachers should pray for is the Spirit’s help in deciding what to teach.

3. *Organize the lesson.* It can be very helpful to the learning process when there is a logical or progressive order to the teacher’s presentation. There are two aspects of this organizing process: First, a teacher will almost always have

more to teach than there is time to teach it, so he or she will have to decide what to emphasize and what to summarize. Second, a teacher needs to decide in what order the principles and concepts should be taught. Are there concepts or ideas that students need to understand (such as terms and symbols) before they can understand a principle? Are there main principles and supporting principles? In a block of scripture that is primarily historical, will some events require background information first?

Note: It is rare that a teacher has unlimited preparation time. A common mistake teachers make is to spend so much time reading and studying and trying to decide *what* to teach that there is not enough time to prepare *how* to teach it. There comes a point in the preparation of every lesson where a teacher must say, “I have enough material. Move on.”

DECIDE THE “HOW”

Following are some fundamental considerations in deciding how to teach the lesson.

1. *Effective teaching edifies.* 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 (see pp. 2–3 for a discussion of these principles). As teachers select how to teach the content, they should constantly ask themselves questions such as “Will this lift my students spiritually?” “Will this offend or hurt anyone?” “Is this appropriate in a gospel learning setting?” Teachers need to remember that it is the Holy Ghost that edifies and to seek for the Spirit throughout the teaching experience.

The Lord teaches his children “line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12). It is not expected that a person will master all of these principles and practices at once.

2. *Focus on learner readiness, participation, and application.* The responsibility given to teachers to direct the learning experience does not imply that the teacher is more important than the learner. Nor does directing learning imply that the teacher should do everything. Focusing on the readiness, participation, and application aspects of learning is important to lesson preparation (see pp. 13–15 for a discussion on these aspects of gospel learning).

3. *Choose methods that teach the content in a way that edifies.* One of the most important and fundamental skills of teaching is selecting the methods and techniques that appropriately (i.e., with the Spirit) teach the content (the “what”) the teacher has determined to be important. For example, an instructional game might be an enjoyable and effective way to teach information (such as the order of the books of the Bible), but will almost certainly be counterproductive if the end goal is to create a feeling of spiritual commitment. Working in small

groups can be effective, but since it takes considerable time, it may not be the best method for teaching a simple principle.

A teacher needs to consider his or her own personality and abilities when selecting teaching methods. One teacher might use a teaching method very effectively, but another one might find it difficult or not to his or her liking. A teacher needs to be willing to try new approaches, but part of edifying

teaching will be the choice of methods or techniques a teacher feels competent using.

4. *Use a variety of methods and approaches.* Part of human nature is the desire for variety and change. When students complain about classes being boring, part of what they often mean is sameness. Even a persuasive teaching technique may

become boring if overused, especially with younger students. And even the best method will not bring about religious education if the Spirit is not present. Many effective teachers vary the ways they teach during class and also from day to day. They are prepared to change methods if what they are doing does not seem to be working. They strive to improve their teaching skills and to increase the number of ways they can help students learn (see the next section, “Gospel Teaching: Skills of Effective Teaching,” for a variety of teaching ideas).

5. *Determine pacing.* After deciding what to teach and how to teach it, teachers must determine how much time to allot to each portion of the lesson. One of the most common mistakes teachers make is taking too much time on the first part of the lesson and then running out of time and having to rush through the last part. A teacher can mentally estimate how much time each section of the lesson

will take or how long using a particular method will take. The need for pacing applies to the full course as well as to individual lessons. For example, if teachers who are asked to teach the New Testament spend

too much time in the four Gospels, they will not be able to cover the latter books. Most curriculum guides contain suggested schedules for covering a year's course.

ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN AN APPROPRIATE SETTING FOR LEARNING

It is not always possible to have ideal teaching conditions, but it is important to make the best possible use of what one does have.

ESTABLISHING AN APPROPRIATE SETTING

1. *The physical setting for learning.* It is not always possible to have ideal teaching conditions, but it is important to make the best possible use of what one does have. Consider the following factors:

- *Seating.* Except for very unusual circumstances, every student should have a comfortable place to sit, a place on which to write and place study materials, and a seating arrangement that allows him or her to easily see the teacher and any visual resources the teacher uses. If the seating is moveable, different seating arrangements can be used to support different kinds of learning activities, such as small group work. Having assigned seating can help teachers learn the names of students quickly, separate students who tend to visit during class, and organize the class for small group work or scripture mastery exercises.

Elder Boyd K. Packer said:

“When we meet to learn the doctrines of the gospel, it should be in a spirit of reverence. . . .

“Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings.”

(In Conference Report, Oct. 1991, p. 27; or Ensign, Nov. 1991, p. 21)

- *Distractions.* Teachers should strive to eliminate anything that would interrupt the teaching and learning process. If teaching takes place in a home setting, there may be some particular challenges. But even there, with careful planning, a teacher can minimize interruptions.

- *Surroundings.* As much as possible, the teacher should see that the temperature in the classroom is comfortable. The learning setting can also be enhanced with gospel-related pictures, illustrations, posters, and other displays.

2. *The spiritual setting for learning.* Teachers can do the following to help create a more spiritual setting for learning before and during class:

- *Practice the principles of edification* (see “How It Is Taught,” p. 2, for these principles).

- *Pray for the Spirit.*

- *“Prepare every needful thing”* (D&C 88:119).

Teachers should arrive at their classroom before the students. They should have the materials and equipment they need for the lesson prepared before students arrive. They can encourage students to be on time and to have a set of scriptures with them at their seats. Making announcements, recording

student attendance, checking on assignments, and conducting other business should be done before beginning the devotional and the lesson.

- *Invite the Spirit as class begins.* Every class should begin with prayer. Many teachers, especially in seminary, like to have a short devotional as well. A devotional can be an excellent

A devotional can be an excellent way to turn the thoughts and the hearts of the students to spiritual things.

way to turn the thoughts and the hearts of the students to spiritual things. It can help students feel the Spirit and be ready to study the scriptures. It is most effective when it is short. Singing a hymn or having students tell how they feel about scriptures they have read can make an effective devotional. Students can also bear testimony, read a scripture verse, or give a thought from the scriptures. Long or elaborate devotionals can not only take time away from the lesson, but may actually cause the Spirit to withdraw. Devotionals that include the serving of refreshments will almost certainly promote a light and playful mood rather than a spiritual one. Teachers should take time to talk with students, especially class leaders, about the purpose of devotionals and what they can do to make them better.

• *Teach students how to have the Spirit in class.*

From time to time, teachers can remind students of what they can do to encourage the Spirit of the Lord to be with them. The discussion might include such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; D&C 50:17-22; and D&C 88:121-26. The discussion could also focus on behaviors that cause the Spirit to withdraw and behaviors that are pleasing to the Spirit (see “The Role of the Holy Ghost in Gospel Learning,” pp. 12–13).

MAINTAINING AN APPROPRIATE SETTING

An appropriate setting for learning must be maintained throughout the learning experience so

that it is not lost. The following suggestions will be helpful:

1. *“Read” the students, and respond appropriately.* A fundamental strategy for teaching is being aware of what is occurring during the teaching/learning

*Elder Boyd K. Packer taught:
“The eyes of the alert teacher move constantly back and forth across the class, taking in each movement, recording each expression, responding quickly to disinterest or confusion. They read immediately a puzzled expression or sense at once when learning has taken place.”*

(Teach Ye Diligently, pp. 138–39.)

process. The point is not just to see what is going on, but to respond in an appropriate manner. If students seem bored or restless, it may be because they are not involved or they do not understand how the lesson applies to them or what is being taught. The teacher may need to change something in the lesson presentation. If students are acting in improper ways and causing the Spirit to withdraw from class, the teacher needs to deal with the problem. Teachers should watch for students who do not interact with other students, or who seem to be alone or lonely.

They may need some additional

personal attention from the teacher or other students in the class.

2. *Maintain order and mutual respect for each other.*

A disorderly or irreverent student or group of students can have a negative effect on the spiritual setting for learning. In some countries, maintaining order and respect in classes can be a challenge.

There are some general principles to keep in mind that will help a teacher maintain proper order and respect in the classroom. This does not mean that a class cannot be enjoyable and fun. The atmosphere that prevails in the temple is not expected in class. Students, especially those in their teens, need to be involved in learning. This requires order, but not complete silence.

“As long as you are feeding the students well, few discipline problems will occur.”

—Boyd K. Packer

“A good beginning is very important. It is half the battle. If the teacher employs discipline consistently, from the beginning, the class will be successful.”

—Boyd K. Packer

- *Practice gospel principles in handling the problem.* When a student or a group of students are misbehaving, it can be irritating and frustrating for the teacher. At such times it is especially important for the teacher to keep control of his or her emotions and to seek for the influence of the Spirit in order to better apply the principles of edification (see “How It Is Taught,” p. 2). To ridicule a student publicly may bring the student into line for a time, but it will not edify either the teacher or the student. It may also result in other students fearing or distrusting the teacher. As teachers correct improper behavior, they need to be firm, but friendly and caring, and then quickly return to the lesson.

- *Prepare and present interesting lessons.* Elder Boyd K. Packer said: “The easiest way to have control over those whom you teach is to teach them something—to feed them. Be well prepared and have an abundance of subject matter organized and ready to serve. There is no substitute for this preparation. As long as you are feeding the students well, few discipline problems will occur” (*Teach Ye Diligently*, p. 153).

- *Begin right.* What a teacher does during the first week can help determine the spiritual setting of the class for the rest of the year. Sometimes teachers overlook improper behavior hoping it will go away, but often it only gets worse.

Elder Packer also said: “A good beginning is very important. It is half the battle. If the teacher employs discipline consistently, from the beginning, the class will be successful” (*Teach Ye Diligently*, p. 131).

President David O. McKay gave the following counsel to teachers in the Church:

“I believe that discipline in the classroom, which implies self-control, and which connotes consideration for others, is the most important part of teaching. . . .

“Disorderly conduct should not be permitted in any class in the Church.”

(“Guidance of a Human Soul—The Teacher’s Greatest Responsibility,” Instructor, Sept. 1965, pp. 341–42.)

- *Be prepared.* The whole spirit of order can be lost in the five minutes it takes a teacher to fumble through a video or to leave the class to get something left elsewhere (see “Prepare every needful thing,” p. 24).

- *Choose the learning activities carefully.* Different learning activities provoke different moods and attitudes in the students. After playing a boisterous instructional game at the beginning of his class, one teacher was dismayed when he could not “pull them back” for the more spiritual conclusion to the lesson. Another teacher found her

discipline problems went up dramatically when she gave out refreshments during class as a reward for good effort.

In addition to these general guidelines, there are some specific steps teachers can take to handle problems as they occur. These are possible approaches and not set rules that will work the same in every situation or with every student.

- *Use the eyes.* Often students talk to each other at inappropriate times because they think the teacher will not notice. The teacher should look at

the students and catch their eye so they know the teacher is watching them.

- *Stop talking.* If students are talking when they should be listening, the teacher should stop talking, even in midsentence if necessary.

Raising the voice to talk over them will not solve the problem.

- *Direct a question.* Without calling attention to the inappropriate behavior, a teacher can ask the offending student a question related to the lesson. This is not done to deliberately shame the student, but to help pull him or her back into the discussion.

- *Move closer.* Another action a teacher can take to correct behavior without having to directly confront a student is to move and stand beside the offending student. The teacher can continue with the lesson, but the student will usually feel the teacher's presence and stop what he or she is doing.

When the above suggestions are followed, many problems in maintaining order will be solved. There may be times, however, when a student or group of students do not respond to these less direct efforts and continue to disrupt the class. Following are some more direct steps a teacher can take to maintain order:

- *Consult with the student privately.* The Lord said that if someone offends another, the

offended person should talk with the offender "between him or her and thee alone" (D&C 42:88).

- *Be firm.* Be caring and respectful, but let the student know that the behavior must change or additional steps will be taken. Following the principles of edification at such times will be particularly important.

Teachers would do well to note the Lord's pattern in dealing with his children whose behavior is not pleasing to him: "Whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you" (D&C 95:1).

- *Separate the problem students.*

- *Consult with parents or priesthood leaders.* If unacceptable behavior persists, it may be necessary for the teacher to consult with the student's parents. In some cases, the bishop of the student may be able to help.

- *Expel the student from class.* President David O. McKay gave the following counsel to teachers: "If [your effort] fails, then you can make an appeal to the parents, and you can say:

'If his misconduct continues, we shall have to put him off the roll.' That is the extreme action. Any teacher can dismiss a [student]; you should exhaust all your other sources before you come to that. But order we *must* have!—it is necessary for soul growth, and if one [student] refuses, or if two [students] refuse to produce that element, then they must leave. Better one [student] starve than an entire class be slowly poisoned" ("The Teacher's Greatest Responsibility," *Instructor*, Sept. 1965, p. 343).

Before asking a student to leave class for any extended period of time, the teacher should counsel with the CES supervisors and appropriate priesthood leaders. The teacher must also remember the Lord's

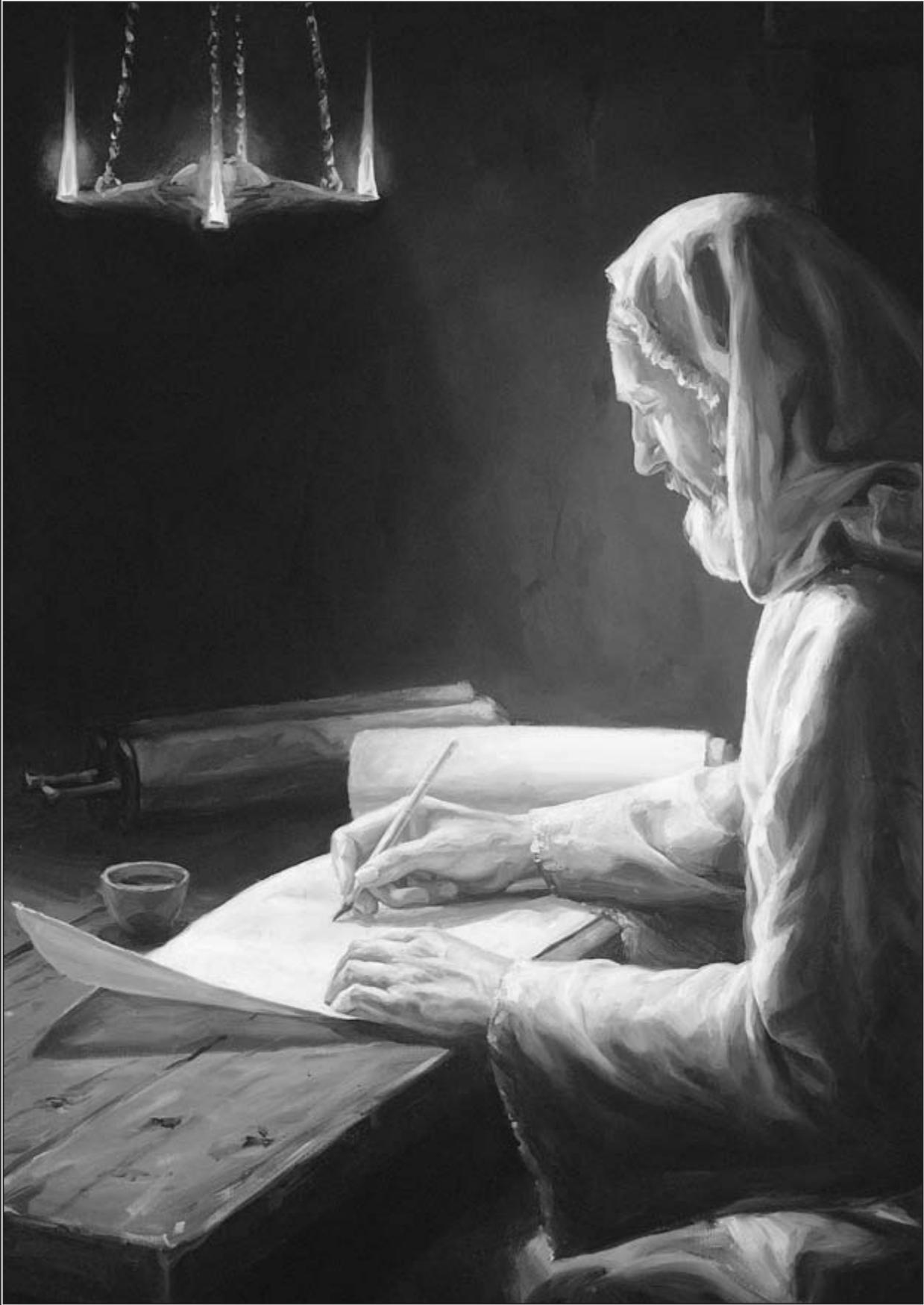
counsel: "Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved" (D&C 121:43).

“Brethren, do you understand that we emphasize the teaching of the scriptures because they are constant? From them we learn the purposes of life, the gifts of the Spirit. From them we learn about personal revelation, how to discern good from evil, truth from error. The scriptures provide the pattern and the basis for correct doctrine.

“From doctrine, we learn principles of conduct, how to respond to problems of everyday living, even to failures, for they, too, are provided for in the doctrines.

“If you understand the great plan of happiness and follow it, what goes on in the world will not determine your happiness. You will be tried, for that is part of the plan, but ‘thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.’”

(Boyd K. Packer, “The Father and the Family,” Ensign, May 1994, p. 20.)



GOSPEL TEACHING: SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Teaching is a complex and multifaceted task. A list of methods or techniques for teaching would include dozens of things, and a full discussion of them would fill volumes. It is possible, however, to cluster them into some general areas of teachings skills (methods, techniques, or approaches) that are essential to effective teaching. However, it is important to remember that methods and skills are only means to an end, and they are not an end in and of themselves. As noted in the first section of this handbook, the goal of CES is not just education, but religious education. Religious education requires the influence of the Holy Spirit or “ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). So, with all of the following focus on methods, teachers should not forget that if they neglect the spiritual side of teaching even the most effective and skillful teaching approaches will not succeed.

This section will cover the five following clusters:

- SCRIPTURE STUDY AND TEACHING
- TEACHER PRESENTATION OR INSTRUCTION
- QUESTIONS AND CLASS DISCUSSION
- VISUAL, AUDIO, AND OTHER TEACHING RESOURCES
- WRITING EXERCISES AND GROUP WORK

SCRIPTURE STUDY AND TEACHING

Before teachers can effectively teach the scriptures, they must become effective in studying the scriptures and they must seek the Holy Spirit.

An important skill of scripture study is analysis.

As noted earlier, an essential part of a teacher's lesson preparation is to study the scriptures until he or she has mastered the content of the scripture block to be taught (see "Decide the 'What,'" p. 20). As also noted, CES teachers are asked to teach students the gospel by teaching the scriptures in a sequential manner (see "Sequential Scripture Teaching," p. 20). These two areas—scripture study and scripture teaching—are interrelated. Before teachers can effectively teach the scriptures, they must become effective in studying the scriptures and they must seek the Holy Spirit. But more than that, a primary goal of every teacher in CES should be to help students learn how to read and study the scriptures for themselves so that the students can feel the Spirit teaching them the important truths of the gospel. The Lord has promised that those who ask, seek, and knock will find answers to their questions and solutions to their problems (see Matthew 7:7–8; D&C 88:63).

The following suggestions may be helpful in both studying and teaching the scriptures so that both teachers and students may learn the gospel and come unto Christ.

USE THE STUDY AIDS

The Church has prepared an extensive set of scripture study aids and included them in the English standard works. (*Guide to the Scriptures* is a group of study aids that has been prepared for other languages.) These aids include such things as footnotes, chapter headings, topical indexes, a Bible dictionary, and maps. They are some of the most valuable helps teachers and students can use as they study the scriptures. In addition to using the study

aids in lesson preparation, teachers should help their students—especially those who are less experienced in reading the scriptures—become familiar with the various study aids.

USE "LOOK FOR" SKILLS

An important skill of scripture study is *analysis*—to look for relationships and meaning. Such "look for" skills are important during scripture study. Teachers can develop the habit of searching while they read and can help their students do the same. One of the more effective scripture teaching skills is to send students into a block of scripture looking for specific things. It is part of the spirit of inquiry that the Lord has counseled his children to have.

Things to look for and to help students look for might include items like the following:

- Gospel principles illustrated by the lives of people
- Questions asked in the scriptures
- Scriptural lists, such as the qualities of an "elect lady" (see D&C 25) or the qualities of charity (see 1 Corinthians 13)
- Definitions of words or concepts, such as *Zion* (see D&C 97:21) or *church* (see D&C 10:55, 67)
- Difficult words or phrases students might have trouble understanding
- Imagery and symbols
- Prophetic commentary on a principle or event (e.g., "And thus we see")
- If/then relationships (e.g., see Isaiah 58:13–14)
- Qualities or characteristics that please or displease God

This is a resource book. Teachers should come back to it again and again. A wise plan is to go to those areas where help is needed immediately and let the others wait. Teachers need to be patient with themselves as they learn and develop their abilities.

"Look for" skills are part of the spirit of inquiry that the Lord has counseled his children to have.

- Patterns—series of events, characteristics, or behaviors that teach a gospel principle (e.g., the command to desire in D&C 11:3, 8, 10, 17, 21)

MARK THE SCRIPTURES

Scripture marking helps both teachers and students note important words, phrases, ideas, people, and events and makes them easier to remember and find. Teachers can encourage student scripture marking by saying something like, “This is an important principle. You may want to mark that verse” or “Here is an important cross-reference. I’ve written this in my margin.” It is better to teach the basic elements of scripture marking than to teach a particular marking system.

TAKE A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

In addition to analysis (see “Use ‘Look for’ Skills,” p. 32), an equally important study skill is *synthesis*, or taking the parts and seeing their broader meaning or relationships to each other. Synthesis can show patterns and principles that the scriptures are meant to teach. Some ways to take this broader perspective during scripture study or to help students do the same during scripture teaching include scripture chaining (linking references that deal with the same subject together); noting patterns or the repetition of certain words, phrases, events, or behaviors that provide clues to what the prophetic writer felt was important; and scriptural contrasts (placing ideas or events side by side so principles become more evident through the contrast).

READ THE SCRIPTURES TOGETHER IN CLASS

Reading the scriptures in class can help students become familiar with and better understand the

verses they are studying. It can also help them become more confident in their ability to read the scriptures on their own. Teachers need to be careful not to embarrass those who do not read well or who are very shy. Students who prefer to not read aloud should not be forced or embarrassed, but teachers can encourage them by telling them that they do not have to be a perfect reader to participate and that there is great value to them when they do so.

There are several ways to read the scriptures together in class:

- Have students read aloud, either one-by-one or in unison.
- Assign students to read the words spoken by each person in a story.
- Have students read silently, then visit individuals and help them as needed.
- Read aloud to the students as they follow in their scriptures.
- Have students read to each other.

President Howard W. Hunter said, “We would hope none of your students would leave your classroom fearful or embarrassed or ashamed that they cannot find the help they need because they do not know the scriptures well enough to locate the proper passages.”

(Eternal Investments [address to religious educators, 10 Feb. 1989], p. 2.)

SUMMARIZE THE SCRIPTURES

As discussed earlier, teachers will not have time to teach everything in a scripture block with equal emphasis (see “Organize the lesson,” p. 22). *Summarizing* means to tell in a few words, or briefly teach, what is contained in chapters or verses that are not emphasized in class. Using chapter or section headings can be very helpful in summarizing scripture sections.

“LIKEN” THE SCRIPTURES

Nephi said that when he taught the teachings of Isaiah he “did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). To liken the scriptures means to understand how the principles and doctrines apply to one’s own life and

Synthesis can show patterns and principles that the scriptures are meant to teach.

To liken the scriptures means to understand how the principles and doctrines apply to one’s own life and to use them to become more like the Savior.

to use them to become more like the Savior. Ultimately, likening the scriptures happens when the Spirit helps the student see the importance of a principle and how it could be a blessing to him or her personally. Some ways to encourage students to do this for themselves are to—

- Encourage students to ask Heavenly Father for help when they have questions or personal problems and then to go to the scriptures and search for the answers so the Holy Ghost may give them enlightenment.
- Bear testimony of the truthfulness and the value of a principle. The bearing of testimony does not always start by saying, “I’d like to bear my testimony.” It can simply be a statement of what a person knows to be true, spoken with sincerity and conviction. It can be a reaffirmation of how a person feels about a principle and the difference it has made in his or her life.
- Use a true story or example from a person’s life that illustrates the value or truthfulness of a principle. True stories that come from the scriptures or from the lives of Church members and leaders have great power to help students see how gospel principles affect lives (see “Use True Stories,” p. 36).
- Ask students to discuss how a gospel principle might apply in current life situations.
- Have students share their thoughts and feelings about a gospel principle. This is a way that they can bear testimony to each other.
- Encourage students to ponder about how they can apply the scriptures to their life. Pondering means to meditate or think deeply about something, and often includes prayer. This can help students feel and learn from the Spirit because the Spirit often reveals the

meaning of the scriptures and how to personally apply them through our thoughts and feelings.

BE AWARE OF AND SENSITIVE TO GENDER-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

Some scriptures are couched in masculine language due to the nature of the languages they were derived

from. For example, in Hebrew, if one is addressing an audience of all females, feminine forms of verbs and pronouns are used. If the audience is mixed, however, then the masculine forms are always used.

Since approximately half of their students will be females, teachers need to be sensitive to gender-specific language and remind students that some masculine terms refer to both males and females. When Adam was told that “all men,

everywhere, must repent” (Moses 6:57), the Lord was certainly speaking of both men and women. King Benjamin’s reference to the natural *man* also applies to the natural woman (see Mosiah 3:19). And Job’s statement that the “morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7) at the creation of the earth was not meant to imply it was an all male chorus!

There are times when the masculine forms *are* specific and accurate. For example, the members of the Godhead are males, and references to priesthood duties may apply strictly to the brethren; but often a passage is not gender specific and teachers need to remind students that these gospel principles or scriptural passages apply to both male and female students.

DEVELOP SCRIPTURE MASTERY

Scripture mastery is the name given to part of the seminary curriculum that is designed to help

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “This is the crowning seal placed on gospel teaching—the personal witness of the teacher that the doctrine he has taught is true!”

(“The Teacher’s Divine Commission,” Ensign, Apr. 1979, p. 24.)

Pondering means to meditate or think deeply about something, and often includes prayer.

students become familiar enough with a list of basic scriptures that they can use them outside of class. However, scripture mastery can also be an important part of institute classes, too. Following are four suggestions on how teachers can use scripture mastery to help teach the scriptures:

1. Use scripture mastery regularly and consistently.

Scripture mastery means being able to find certain basic scripture verses, to understand what they mean, and to apply them in daily life. The scripture mastery program includes one hundred scripture verses (twenty-five for each book of scripture) that teachers should help students “master” and review. The key to helping students master these scriptures is consistency and repetition.

2. Help students find and master the scripture mastery verses. Help students learn the

reference for each of the scripture mastery verses and practice finding the verses. For example, teachers can read part of the verses to students, show an object or a picture about the verses, or ask questions about them and have students find the verses or tell where the verses are located. Reviewing the references often helps students master them. Teachers should use

other scripture teaching methods discussed previously to teach the scripture mastery passages.

Students can also better master the scripture mastery verses when they use them in giving short talks in class, in devotionals, or in their wards and branches.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “A mission requires a great deal of mental preparation. You must memorize missionary discussions, memorize scriptures, and oftentimes learn a new language. The discipline to do this is learned in your early years.”

(In Conference Report, Apr. 1985, p. 48; or Ensign, May 1985, p. 36.)

3. Help students memorize scriptures. Memorization is a valuable tool for scripture study. Students should be encouraged to memorize a few important verses. This method also helps prepare them for missionary service. Students should not be required to memorize all of the scripture mastery references.

4. Be wise in the use of competition. Many teachers have had considerable success in using class or team competition to teach scripture mastery. Competition can easily be overdone, however, and may actually work negatively for

some students. Teachers should be sensitive to the feelings of students who are not competitive or who are not as quick in recalling things. Noncompetitive ways to encourage scripture mastery include focusing on cooperation by allowing students to assist one another or by letting students compete with the teacher rather than against one another.

TEACHER PRESENTATION OR INSTRUCTION

Those times when the teacher talks and the students listen will be called teacher presentation or instruction.

Previous sections stressed the importance of having the learner actively participating in the learning process. There are times, however, when the teacher needs to talk and the students need to listen. This has sometimes been called the “lecture” method. For purposes of this handbook, those times when the teacher talks and the students listen will be

called teacher presentation or instruction. It is one of the primary activities of teachers as they direct the learning process.

Sometimes people talk about lecture or teacher instruction as if it were an undesirable method. This is not so when it is used correctly. Jesus often taught this way, as did many of the prophets. However,

The teacher has the responsibility to direct the learning experience.

since lecturing is a teacher-centered activity, if it is overused in the classroom—or, as in the case of some teachers, *only* used—it can reduce teaching effectiveness. But the teacher has the responsibility to direct the learning experience.

Some of the major functions of teacher presentation or instruction would include imparting information, illustrating, clarifying or explaining a doctrine or principle, telling a story, summarizing or drawing a conclusion, making transitions between various parts of the lesson, and bearing testimony. Following are some suggestions for using this method more effectively.

USE TRUE STORIES

In the scriptures and from Church history there are many stories from the lives of the prophets and other righteous people that illustrate how gospel principles affect lives when lived properly, or from the lives of the disobedient, showing how disobedience leads to sorrow and tragedy. Retelling these stories can be one of the most inspiring things teachers can do for their students. Stories can help create learner readiness, help students to participate in the learning process through vicarious experiences, and show them how to make application of gospel principles. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

“We have in the Church an untapped, almost unknown, treasury of inspiring and faith-promoting stories. They are the best of their kind and there are thousands of them.

“One reason they are the best and most inspiring faith-promoting stories is because they were selected and edited by the Lord himself. They are the ones he had his prophets choose and place in the holy scriptures so that we would have samples before us of how to act and what to do in all the circumstances that confront us in life.

“They are stories of real people who faced real problems and who solved them in a way that was pleasing to the Lord. They have been preserved for us so that we will know how to act and what to do in all the affairs of our daily lives. . . .

“Perhaps the perfect pattern in presenting faith-promoting stories is to teach what is found in the scriptures and then to put a seal of living reality upon it by telling a similar and equivalent thing that has happened in our dispensation and to our people and—most ideally—to us as individuals” (“The How and Why of Faith-promoting Stories,” *New Era*, July 1978, pp. 4–5).

Two cautions should be noted about the use of stories. Sometimes the use of stories, particularly stories from the teacher’s own personal experiences, becomes the dominant method or technique of teaching. Stories are, like all other methods, not an end in and of themselves. They should be used to help teach gospel principles, to enlighten and enliven scripture teaching, and to help students feel the power of the Spirit. They should not be used for personal aggrandizement or emotional manipulation. Also, true stories usually carry the most powerful content. If a story is not true (such as a humorous story that illustrates a point), it should be clearly stated that it is not true at the beginning of the story. Teachers should be careful not to embellish the facts of a true story to make it more dramatic or impactful.

PLAN THE PRESENTATION OR INSTRUCTION PORTION OF THE LESSON

Occasionally, teachers carefully prepare other parts of their lesson but do not give the same attention to those times when they will be making a presentation. Presentations also need careful planning and preparation. Careful planning and preparation include deciding how to begin and how to develop the presentation in a logical fashion. Learner readiness and application also need to be kept in mind, especially if teacher presentation tends to become prolonged. One of the concerns about teacher presentation is that students can easily become only passive participants in the learning experience. Most importantly, teachers must seek to have the Spirit as they make their presentation.

One of the concerns about teacher presentation is that students can easily become only passive participants in the learning experience.

COMBINE TEACHER PRESENTATION WITH OTHER METHODS

There are times and settings for a teacher to appropriately use a formal and lengthy teacher presentation or lecture, such as reading or closely following a pre-prepared text in a symposium or conference, but the classroom would rarely be such a setting. A more effective use of teacher presentation in the classroom is to use it as part of an overall lesson plan that incorporates other methods and approaches within the presentation. The presentation needs to be flexible enough to allow for change if it becomes obvious that students are bored or confused. In this way, even when the teacher is instructing or presenting, the climate remains focused on the student and on learning and the teacher can make adaptations as needed. Someone

once likened it to the string in a necklace of pearls. The pearls are the various methods a teacher uses (questions, discussion, group work, etc.), but they are strung and held together by the teacher's presentation or instruction. The string alone does not make an attractive necklace.

USE VARIETY IN THE PRESENTATION

There are ways to introduce variety in a teacher presentation. Changing voice inflection, tone, and volume are important. Moving around as the presentation progresses is another way to avoid sameness. There can even be a variety in the kinds of material being presented—for example, relating stories, using humor, reading quotes, illustrating quotes or major points on an overhead projector or chalkboard, and bearing testimony.

QUESTIONS AND CLASS DISCUSSION

In religious education, effective teaching is edifying teaching, and people are more likely to be edified when they participate in learning under the influence of the Spirit.

In some areas of the world the traditional educational approach is to have the teacher impart information through set lectures and study assignments. There is little student participation except in memorizing and repeating back what is learned. But in religious education, effective teaching is edifying teaching, and people are more likely to be edified when they participate in learning under the influence of the Spirit (see "Learner Participation," p. 14). Asking good questions and directing effective discussions are primary ways to encourage that participation. A discussion is when a teacher verbally interacts with students and students verbally interact with each other in a manner that fosters learning. A good discussion can help students learn the value of personal inquiry in their own lives. They need to learn how to ask for help from the Lord and then to search for answers. A stimulating discussion is also a way to encourage learner readiness and help students apply what they learn. Following are some ideas for developing stimulating questions and directing inspiring and persuasive discussions:

1. *Ask questions that stimulate thinking and encourage student response.* Questions can be asked that lead students to search for information, analyze what they are studying, or help them apply it in their own lives. Teachers should avoid questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no," or where the answer is so obvious the students are not motivated to think about it.

- Good questions require students to search the scriptures for the answer and to seek the Spirit's help. Such questions often begin with words such as *who, what, when, how, where* and *why*.
- When teaching the scriptures, questions that help students think about the meaning of a scripture verse are good. These questions are usually asked after students have become familiar with the verses. They may have more than one possible answer and could help students start a discussion. They often begin with phrases like "Why do you think . . ." or "How is it that . . ."

- Ask students to apply what they have learned from the verses. These questions may also have more than one possible answer. For example, “Why should prayer be one of the first things we do each day? What difference would it make if it was?” or “What did you learn from the example of Abraham (or Nephi, etc.) that you could apply to your life?”
- Ask students to compare things, such as asking them to compare a person or an event in one part of the scriptures to another person or event somewhere else.
- Good questions are at the very heart of good discussions. A good question should be stimulating and challenging, but usually not controversial or sensational. Sometimes teachers will ask a controversial question just to stimulate a lively discussion. This may frustrate the students and create contention in the class, which grieves the Spirit (see 3 Nephi 11:29).

The whole purpose of discussion is to get students involved in the gospel learning experience so they begin to discover principles and concepts for themselves and then have the Spirit testify to them of their truthfulness.

2. *Plan the discussion.* Like other methods of teaching, a discussion needs to be carefully prepared and then conducted under the influence of the Spirit, following principles of edification. The teacher needs to have thought out the purpose of the discussion (how it will help students understand what they need to learn), what series of questions will lead to that purpose, how to ask those questions in the most effective manner, and how to respond if student answers lead off in an unwanted direction. Throughout the discussion the teacher needs to encourage learner participation. The whole purpose of discussion is to get students involved in the gospel learning experience so they begin to discover principles and concepts for themselves and then have the Spirit testify to them of their truthfulness.
3. *Follow the Lord’s model.* Note how the Lord instructed his Saints to find truth: “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63). Plan a

discussion so that students are seeking, asking, and knocking, and then the teacher and the Spirit can work together to help students receive truth and understanding, have things opened to their understanding, and draw closer to their Savior.

4. *Call on students by name.* When a teacher does not specify the person who is expected to answer, often only the bolder students will reply. It can be useful not to designate to whom the question is directed until after the question is asked. When a name is specified first, other students may relax and feel they do not need to think about the question. Also, there will always be some students who want to answer almost every question. By calling on other students by name, the teacher can get responses from others less likely to participate.
5. *Give students time to think.* Sometimes teachers ask a question, pause for a second or two, then, when no one immediately responds, panic and give the answer themselves. Be patient! Students often need time to find the answer in the scriptures or to think about the question and what they want to say. The silence should not trouble the teacher if it does not go on too long. On the other hand, sometimes there is no response because the question is not clear. If this is the case, the teacher may need to rephrase the question or ask the students if they understand what was asked.
6. *Listen to the students’ answers.* Teachers are sometimes so concerned about what to say or do next that they do not pay attention to what students are saying. A teacher can make sure that he or she understands the answers by asking questions like “What do you mean by that?” or “Give me an example of what you mean.” Questions can be redirected to other students to maintain full class participation. Usually, unless time is limited, all students who want to give an answer should have an opportunity to speak. Teachers can remind students to listen to each other and to not talk when someone else is speaking (see D&C 88:122).

7. Acknowledge the response in a positive manner.

When a student gives a response, the teacher needs to acknowledge it in some way. This can be a simple

“thank you” or a comment about the answer. When an incorrect response is given, the teacher will need to be especially sensitive about not embarrassing the student.

VISUAL, AUDIO, AND OTHER TEACHING RESOURCES

When students are asked to see, touch, taste, or smell, in addition to listening, learning can be enhanced.

Numerous studies have shown that people learn best when more than one of the senses are utilized in their study experience. When students are asked to see, touch, taste, or smell, in addition to listening, learning can be enhanced. Often, visual and audio experiences create a readiness for the Spirit to fulfil his functions.

The following are only a few of the ways a teacher can bring other senses besides hearing into the learning process.

CHALKBOARD

In those areas where a chalkboard is not available, a large piece of paper or poster board can fill the same purpose. On the chalkboard a teacher can outline the major points or principles of the lesson, diagram a doctrine or an event, do outline maps, develop flow charts, draw pictures of things found in the scriptures, create charts showing historical events, list things from the scriptures as students find them, or do a dozen or more other activities that will enhance learning.

*Elder Boyd K. Packer said,
“On balance I think that no
teaching aid surpasses, and few
equal, the chalkboard: first,
because it is simple to use, and
next, because it is [almost]
universally available.”*

(Teach Ye Diligently, p. 224.)

OBJECTS AND PICTURES

Objects and pictures can be used to help students visualize what the people, places, events, objects, and symbols in the scriptures looked like. Instead of just talking about yokes (see Matthew 11:28–30), a teacher could bring a picture of one to class or draw one on the chalkboard; he or she might even have

access to a small model of one. Students could smell and touch a flower as they read about the “lilies of the field” (see Matthew 6:28–29). They could taste unleavened bread. Objects or pictures of things that students may already be familiar with can be used to help them discover new things about the scriptures or can be compared to a spiritual principle. Pictures can be effective in helping students visualize and understand the scriptures, especially when they are

used to stimulate a discussion by asking questions about the picture. Maps and charts can also help explain what is happening in the verses.

MUSIC

The Lord said, “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:12).

Consider the following

statement of the First Presidency:

“The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

“Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end” (preface to *Hymns*, p. ix).

These conditions are aspects of edifying teaching. Following are some ways to use music to enhance the learning experience:

“For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:12).

- Talk to students about the importance of music in worship and about how it can help create a climate where the Spirit can more effectively function. Remind them that they will never learn to enjoy singing the hymns of the Church until they *start* to sing the hymns of the Church.

- Have inspirational music playing as students come to class or during class while they are working on a writing assignment.

- At appropriate times during the lesson, sing a hymn that is directly related to what is being taught for that day. For example, sing “Love One Another” (*Hymns*, no. 308) when teaching about the events of the Last Supper (see John 13–14), or sing “Praise to the Man” (*Hymns*, no. 27) with Doctrine and Covenants 135. There is both a scriptural and a topical index in the back of the hymnbook that can be helpful in this regard.

- Music can be part of scripture mastery exercises (see “Develop Scripture Mastery,” p. 34). Have the class sing a hymn together, and then have students find scriptures that teach the same principle as found in the hymn.

AUDIOVISUAL PRESENTATIONS

The use of audio-visual resources can be made more inspiring if students are invited to participate in the learning experience.

Audiotapes, videos, and movies can recreate important events from the scriptures or dramatize how people try to deal with problems and apply scriptural principles. They can help students visualize and experience what is happening. They provide opportunities for the Spirit to bear witness of the truth. They can dramatize how principles taught in the scriptures can be applied in modern life.

Too often, teachers show or play a piece of a video or an audiotape without making it part of their overall lesson plan or without using it fully to enhance learning. The use of audiovisual resources

can be made more inspiring if students are invited to participate in the learning experience by looking for how the message of the story applies to their life. It may be helpful to write on the chalkboard what students could do as they watch or listen to the story.

Sometimes only part of the movie, video, or audiotape is necessary to make the point or to stimulate a discussion. Sometimes there may be value in pausing during the presentation to point out information that will help the students.

CAUTIONS

Perhaps more than with other teaching skills, the use of visual and audio resources in

teaching comes with some inherent challenges. And sometimes they are both misused and abused. Teachers should ask themselves the following questions as they prepare to use these methods:

1. *Does it help the students learn what is important?* A video, movie, or audiotape can be very entertaining or impressive to students, but does it directly contribute to the purposes of the lesson and what students need to learn? Have the students been prepared so they will benefit from the message? Using these resources because they are time fillers or entertaining are not sufficient reasons for their use.
2. *Is it worth the time it takes?* Elder Boyd K. Packer counseled: “Audio and visual aids in a class can be a blessing or a curse, depending upon how they are used. They might be compared to spices and flavorings that go with a meal. They should be used sparingly to accent or make a lesson interesting, but the basic instruction, when all is said and done, will for the most part be lecture, question and answer, and recitation” (*Teach Ye Diligently*, p. 224).
3. *Is it appropriate and in keeping with Church standards?* In other words, is it edifying? Many

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(*Teach Ye Diligently*, p. 224.)

products produced in the world may carry a good message, but with them come undesirable features that may offend or teach ideas that are not desirable in religious education. Even if a short video or audio segment is appropriate, if it comes from an inappropriate source it should not be used. And even with the chalkboard there are items that can be drawn or diagrammed that are not appropriate in religious education. Items that are controversial or sensational usually do not build faith and testimony.

4. *Will it violate copyright laws?* Many videos and other commercially produced products have use restrictions and are protected by copyright laws. In recent years, holders of copyrights in many countries have become much more aggressive in seeking out and prosecuting violators of copyright laws. It is important that all teachers and leaders in CES follow these guidelines so that they are in compliance with the law and so that neither they nor the Church are liable for legal action. While the guidelines below specifically outline the restrictions in the United States, similar laws are in place in other countries.

- *Use of commercially produced videos.* The law recognizes classroom use of commercial videocassettes as having certain exceptions to regular copyright restrictions (such as “for home use only”), but only if *all* of the following conditions are met: It must be (a) a legally made cassette (b) used in face-to-face teaching (c) in a classroom or similar place devoted to instruction (d) by a nonprofit educational organization (e) for teaching purposes *and not for entertainment*.

Please note the “not for entertainment” clause. Showing rented or purchased commercial videocassettes before, after, or during class merely as entertainment is illegal. This would almost always be the case when a full movie is shown.

- *Use of programs taped off the air.* A program taped off the air can be used in the classroom if the following conditions are met: (a) The copy is retained no more than forty-five days, and then it must be erased. (b) The tape is used in the classroom only for the first ten days following the recording. (c) Generally, only one showing per class is permitted. (d) If excerpts of a program are used, the overall message or content must not be altered. (e) The tapes may not be duplicated for sharing with others. (f) All copies must include the copyright notice for the program. (g) Merging segments of different programs to create a teaching compilation is illegal.

- *Use of Church-produced materials.* Films, videos, and musical recordings produced by the Church are copyrighted and are not to be duplicated without specific written permission from the Copyrights and Permissions Office, unless otherwise noted on the label.

- *Duplication of music.* Duplication of tapes containing copyrighted music is a direct violation of copyright law unless written permission has been given. Duplication of copyrighted lyrics to a song is also illegal without permission. Hymns in the LDS hymn book may be copied, unless otherwise noted.

WRITING EXERCISES AND GROUP WORK

Writing exercises and small group work can be important to the in-class experience if they are used wisely. They can help a teacher create learner readiness and, if done well, can significantly enhance

learner participation. In certain cases they can be an effective way to have the Holy Spirit help students make personal application of gospel principles.

Writing exercises can help a teacher create learner readiness and, if done well, can significantly enhance learner participation.

Writing exercises, like all other methods, should support the teaching plan.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Using a written exercise or prepared handouts shares information quickly, involves students in the lesson, and encourages them to take more responsibility in learning. Assignments should require students to read and search the scriptures and help them think about, understand, and apply the gospel principles in the verses they are studying. Writing assignments might include study exercises, tests, quizzes, instructional games, and essays. In the Church Educational System, the need for writing assignments in seminary programs varies according to the nature of the program.

In areas where students are scattered geographically, or where sufficient numbers are not available for daily classes, students participate in home-study seminary. Home-study classes usually meet only one day each week, with the students doing the main work in both reading and studying the scriptures at home. In such cases, writing assignments become a primary part of their learning experience.

In places where there are sufficient numbers of students close together, classes are held daily during the week and the students do their work (except for reading the scriptures) in class. Out-of-class assignments that are to be completed at home are *not* encouraged in daily seminary programs, but in-class writing assignments can be effective.

In any program, writing assignments should meet learning objectives and be adapted to the individual abilities and needs of the students.

GROUP WORK

It is sometimes helpful to divide the class into pairs or small groups so students can work with each other on a task or assignment, such as studying a block of scripture. Large groups of five or more often become less serviceable. Teachers may want to choose a student leader for each group to help them complete the assignment. The following are some ideas to help use writing assignments or small groups in teaching:

1. *Plan writing exercises to enhance learning.*

Writing exercises, like all other methods, should support the teaching plan. They should not be given as “busy work” or as a punishment for misbehavior. Written exercises that can enhance learning might include such things as writing exercises that lead students to discover principles for themselves or exercises that require analysis or synthesis of what the students are studying.

Some writing exercises can be directly related to the scripture block, such as writing a verse or a scripture story in their own words; writing questions, thoughts, or feelings they have as they read; writing answers to questions about the verses; or writing about personal experiences that relate to a gospel principle in the verses. Writing journal entries can be an effective way to help students apply what they have learned. (*Note:* You should not require journal entries that focus on personal feelings or commitments to be shared with others, including yourself.)

With students who are younger or whose abilities are more limited, learning can be guided by writing exercises where more information is provided for them and less is asked of them. Filling in the blanks, giving specific scriptural references instead of a more general block, and other such exercises can be more helpful to such students.

2. *Give students time to complete the assignment.*

Time limits should be appropriate to the difficulty of the exercise. Teachers may want to quietly visit with each student while the class is working on written assignments. Home-study teachers can support learning by contacting the students at home to help them complete their assignments. In group work, time limits should be set at intervals. The teacher should announce the amount of time left to complete the assignment.

3. *Have students report on what they have written or done as a group.*

Students can be asked to discuss in class what they have written, or be invited to ask the questions they had as they were studying. If students hand in their written exercises, the teacher may want to write comments or answer questions on the assignments.

4. *Move around the classroom to help monitor learning and maintain control.* The teacher should remain actively involved in the learning activity once the groups are divided and working or after a written assignment is given. Moving from student to student or group to group, listening to ensure they understand the task, and becoming part of each group for a time and working with them are

all ways to participate with the students. Group work or writing time can easily become a time when students visit on personal matters or joke around with one another. The presence of the teacher and his or her active involvement in monitoring the learning activity will do much to prevent such problems from occurring.

Teaching the gospel is the Lord's work, and he wants CES to succeed in that task. When teachers and leaders call on him daily, they will feel that help come. He gives a promise to those who are striving to live and teach his gospel:

"Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;

"For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.

"But a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall declare whatsoever thing ye declare in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things.

"And I give unto you this promise, that inasmuch as ye do this the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever ye shall say (D&C 100:5–8).

THE CHURCH OF
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OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

