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LEARNING FOR THE WHOLE SOUL

This message is for the youth and young adults in the Lord's Church. Many years ago I had a strong impression come to me about you and about this day. It was as if I saw children in Primary all across the earth. I knew they would make and keep covenants with the Lord. And I knew that the Lord would bless them with opportunities for deep learning, spiritually and temporally, and raise them up as a mighty army to build His kingdom and prepare the earth for His return.

You are those children, and this is your day.

It is a great day in the kingdom of God, a day full of opportunities for you to learn and grow and experience joy and happiness. There are important challenges, to be sure. Yet through the redeeming and strengthening powers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, through His glorious gospel and His true and living Church, the Lord continues to open doors and prepare the way for you to repent, learn deeply, grow spiritually, and become more converted to Him. The Lord is preparing His kingdom and



His people for His return, and you of the rising generation are playing a central role in that great work.

This is a day of miracles. New technologies make it possible for learning and education to flourish. That is true

The Lord is moving with power in His Church for you to obtain the education He wants you to have.



Learning is essential to help us reach our mortal and eternal potential.

instructed more perfectly . . . in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand” (D&C 88:78).

Spiritual Knowledge Has Priority

Deep learning, in any field of study, is inherently a spiritual experience, anchored to a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and obedience to His commandments so that the Holy Ghost can teach you. Deep learning is not easy, but it is worth the effort! If you really desire to learn deeply, if your heart and your mind are open to learning, and if you act on that desire, the Lord will bless you. When you do your part—pray in faith, prepare, study, engage actively, and do your very best—the Holy Ghost will teach you, magnify your capacity to act on what you learn, and help you become what the Lord wants you to become. “Salvation itself,” taught President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), “under the atonement of Christ, is a process of education. . . . Knowledge is a means of eternal progress.”⁵

for both secular as well as spiritual knowledge. The Lord is moving with power in His Church for you to obtain the education He wants you to have.

This is all part of the commandment the Lord gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) in the beginning of the Restoration: “It is my will that you should . . . obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion” (D&C 93:53).

This commandment has taken on an urgency in our day as the Lord hastens His work. Now is the time for you to take advantage of the opportunities for education that are before you, and the potential for learning and growth that is in you.

These words of President Thomas S. Monson ought to ring in your ears every day:

“I urge you to pursue your education.”¹

“Your talents will expand as you study and learn.”²

“Each of you . . . has the opportunity to learn and to grow. Expand your knowledge, both intellectual and spiritual, to the full stature of your divine potential.”³

Deep Learning

The learning that allows each of you to rise “to the full stature of your divine potential” is what I will call *deep learning*: learning of the whole soul—the mind, the heart, the body, and the immortal spirit. Deep learning applies to every kind of knowledge, whether spiritual or secular. Learning is deep when it increases your power to do three things: (1) to know and understand; (2) to take effective, righteous action; and (3) to become more like our Heavenly Father.⁴

As the Lord taught the Prophet Joseph, deep learning must be done in the Lord’s way, through revelation and inspiration in the Light of Christ and by the power of the Holy Ghost and through active, diligent study and teaching of one another, attended by the grace of Jesus Christ. That is true for any kind of knowledge. Here are the Lord’s commandments about deep learning:

“Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

“Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be

This process applies to any setting you may be in and to any kind of knowledge. However, the most important knowledge you need to acquire is knowledge of the things of God. Spiritual knowledge, therefore, must have first place in your heart and in your priorities. The Prophet Joseph Smith emphasized the primacy of

spiritual knowledge in these words: “A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs

revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.”⁶

It is true that the gospel encompasses all truth,⁷ but knowledge and understanding of the plain and simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ must be your foundation for all deep learning. Putting spiritual knowledge first in your mind and in your heart ensures that you will rely on the Lord and the Holy Spirit in your learning, that you will see everything you study in the light of His gospel, and that you will continue to learn deeply all through your lives.

Deep Learning for a Lifetime

Deep learning of both spiritual and secular knowledge is a commandment of the Lord. Imagine what would happen if you were to stop learning. What if I had stopped learning when I graduated from college in the mid-1970s? I would have had no new insights or revelation from the living prophets, the scriptures, or the Holy Ghost; I would know nothing of ongoing developments in technology, health care, world affairs, government regulations, or

Learning must be done in the Lord's way, through revelation and inspiration.



education. There would have been no personal growth or spiritual development through repentance and learning from experience.

When I served as president of Brigham Young University–Idaho, Sister Clark was often asked, “How did you meet President Clark?” Her response often began with, “He wasn’t President Clark when I met him.” If I had not continued learning, I would have gotten older, but I would still be the 25-year-old whom Sister Clark knew when I graduated from college—not a good prospect for Sister Clark or for our family!

If you stop learning, you cannot become more knowledgeable, more effective, more useful, more faithful, or more like your Father in Heaven.

Your experience with learning in your youth and young adult years lays the foundation for a lifetime of learning. If you develop the ability to learn deeply in the Lord’s way—through the Spirit and with diligent, active study—it will be a great blessing to you.

A key to reaping that blessing is to keep your heart and mind open to learning. Here are three things you can do to always be ready to learn:

1. Ask the Lord to bless you with the desire to learn deeply.

If you already have the desire to learn deeply, wonderful. If not, ask the Lord for that gift. The Lord will

educate your desires so that you will want to learn what and how He wants you to learn all through your lives. In the Lord’s plan, how He wants you to learn—by the Spirit, with diligent study—is just as important as what He wants you to learn.

2. Make repentance a central part of your life.

Repentance is a divine process. It is the way we change, grow, and get better through the redeeming and strengthening power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. If repentance is central to your life, you will always be on your knees, humbling yourself before the Lord, seeking His help in how to use your time and how to serve Him.

3. Worship in the temple as often as you can.

The temple is the Lord’s house of revelation and learning. If you go there often, if you take your questions and your desires to learn with you, the Lord Himself will teach you.

Overcoming Opposition to Deep Learning

Deep learning now will prepare you for a lifetime of learning. However, I know you face obstacles and even outright opposition to the learning the Lord wants you to obtain. Fear, discouragement, laziness, difficulty with reading, lack of support or opportunity, cultural or family



Through the Lord’s power, including advances in technology, learning opportunities are more available than ever.

traditions, worries about cost, temptations of the world, false ideas about education, and many other things may stand in your way.⁸

I know that some of you face several of these things, and they feel like insurmountable barriers to learning.

I bear you my witness that no matter where you live, no matter what your circumstances may be, the Lord Jesus Christ stands with you against all this opposition with His redeeming love and His almighty power. Through His atoning sacrifice, He has experienced and overcome everything that could block your progress toward eternal life. In His strength and with His power, you can overcome whatever stands between you and the learning the Lord wants you to obtain.

This is His promise to you, and His promises are true: “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; see also Matthew 7:7).

Conclusion

This really is a great day in the kingdom of God. The Lord is hastening His work, and we have seen miracle after miracle as the Lord moves in power to open up wonderful opportunities for you to learn deeply.

The Lord is working in your lives to bless and prepare you. I pray that you will act with faith in Jesus Christ to take advantage of every opportunity

to learn deeply, grow in knowledge and understanding, bring about His righteous purposes, and become what you were born to become. ■

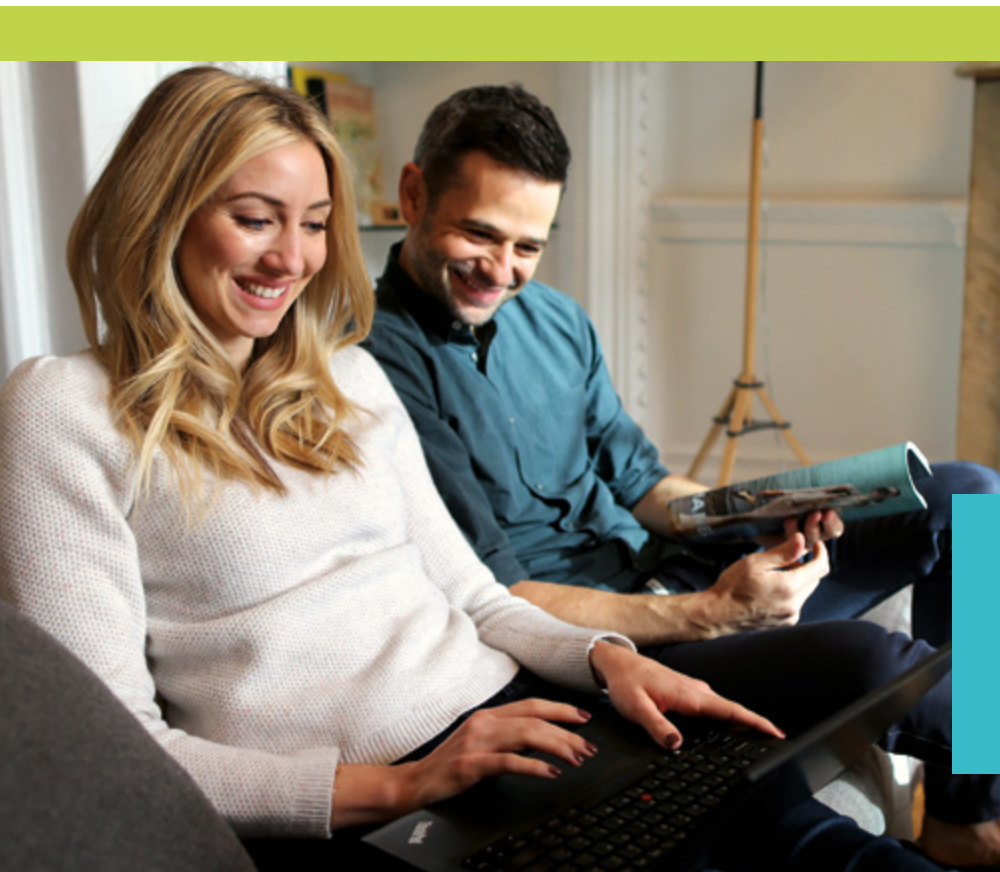
For more information on Church education opportunities, visit education.lds.org. To learn more about seminary for youth, see page 32 in this issue. To learn more about institute for young adults, see pages 20 and 22 in this issue.

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 116.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Three Goals to Guide You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 119.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “The Mighty Strength of the Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 95.
4. The pattern of “know, do, become” has been used widely as a framework for leadership development and in discussion of the Lord’s plan for the spiritual

development of His children. See Thomas S. Monson, “To Learn, to Do, to Be,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 60–68; and Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34. For an in-depth treatment of each of the elements of this pattern, see the three-volume series by David A. Bednar: *Increase in Learning* (2011); *Act in Doctrine* (2012); and *Power to Become* (2014).

5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 314.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 266.
7. This quote from Brigham Young captures the idea well: “Not only does the religion of Jesus Christ make the people acquainted with the things of God, and develop within them moral excellence and purity, but it holds out every encouragement and inducement possible, for them to increase in knowledge and intelligence, in every branch of mechanism, or in the arts and sciences, for all wisdom, and all the arts and sciences in the world are from God, and are designed for the good of his people” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 193).
8. Here is an example of a false idea born out of cultural traditions that may affect young adults: A generation ago, a person living in the developed world could find a good, well-paying job with enough income to support a family with some high school education or, even better, with high school graduation. That idea still persists despite the fact that for most people, in most developed countries, and even in the developing world, those days are gone. Education and learning beyond high school in fields that are in high demand, whether by earning certification in technical skills or acquiring a college degree (and in some fields an advanced degree), has become essential for supporting a family, providing for retirement years, and establishing a temporal foundation for service in the Church.



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