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# A **Work** FOR US TO DO

*Parents and teachers can help children and students live the gospel more fully by asking them to act on the principles they are learning.*

**W**hen Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith the night of September 21, 1823, he called Joseph by name and told him “that God had a work for [him] to do” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33). Moroni was a divine messenger with a divine commission for Joseph to translate the Book of Mormon.

Moroni repeated his message to Joseph three times that night and again the next day when Joseph attempted to leave the field where he had been working with his father. A little while later, and during four additional “interviews,” Joseph “received instruction and intelligence” from Moroni before being commanded to begin the work of translation (see Joseph Smith—History 1:54).

Moroni’s repeated lessons gave Joseph time to learn what he should learn so that he could do what he should do and be what he should be.<sup>1</sup> As Joseph’s teacher, Moroni had the task of preparing the Prophet to do the



work the Lord had called him to do.

In one sense, all who have been called to teach (and that eventually includes all members of the Church) are divine messengers from the Lord. They are on the Lord’s errand, just as Moroni was. Like Moroni, they communicate to their learners the work that God has for them to do. They then ask their students to teach others what they have learned, such as

when Moroni asked Joseph to recount his experience to his father (see Joseph Smith—History 1:49). Finally, they review and repeat lessons so that learners can become skilled at doing the work they have been called to do.

## **The Most Important Learning**

When President Thomas S. Monson was a young boy, one of his Sunday School teachers, Lucy Gertsch, gave her students a work that God had for them to do. Her lesson that day was on Acts 20:35: “It is more blessed to give than



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to receive.” One of the class members, Billy, was absent that day because his mother had just passed away. While teaching the lesson, Sister Gertsch “closed the manual and opened [their] . . . hearts to the glory of God.”

She asked the class, “How much money do we have in our class party fund?”

The students proudly answered, “Four dollars and seventy-five cents.” Then Sister Gertsch gently suggested, “Billy’s family is hard pressed and grief stricken. What would you think of the possibility of visiting the family members this morning and giving to them your fund?”

President Monson, along with his classmates, visited Billy’s home and gave to the grieving family the funds originally designated for a class party. Following the good deed, President Monson explained the gospel learning he and his class had experienced that day:

“Our hearts were lighter than they had ever been, our joy more full, our understanding more profound. A God-inspired teacher had taught her boys and girls an eternal lesson of divine truth: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”<sup>2</sup>

Rather than merely talking about a gospel principle, the class *did* something. They *lived* the principle during that very class period. Sister Gertsch had a work for them to do. And that is when the most important learning occurs.

Gospel teaching that changes behavior often occurs outside a Church classroom. Sister Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general president, tells of an experience in a school library when she was in the seventh grade. While she and her friends were selecting books, her friends suggested that they all check out a romance novel. Sister Dalton did not even know what romance novels were at the time but went along with her friends and chose one.

When she went to check out the book, the librarian looked at young Elaine and then at the book. “Elaine,” she said, “this book is not really the one you want.”

The librarian then selected another book and gave it to her.



“You will like this one much more,” she said. “It’s Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. After you read it, I want you to come back, and we can talk about it.”

Sister Dalton accepted the librarian’s invitation to read the book and later returned to discuss it with her. The librarian had a work for her to do.

Of all the settings for transformative gospel teaching, the home is the most powerful. When Brother Chad H. Webb, director of the Church’s seminaries and institutes, was a young boy growing up on a farm, his father, a high school teacher, had to earn extra money in the summer to provide for their family of six children. One summer the family felled trees on their 20-acre farm and sold the trees to the local lumber mill. His father explained that at the end of the summer each child would receive a certain percentage of the proceeds.

Young Chad worked hard all summer. Just before school began, his father distributed the appropriate amount to each child. Chad received \$60—a large sum of money for a nine-year-old.

After distributing the wages, his father said: “The brethren have asked that we contribute to the new temple that will be built in Seattle, Washington, [USA]. Your mother and I have decided to give all of the money we can. You might want to decide how much you want to give.”

**Sister Dalton accepted the librarian’s invitation to read the book and discuss it with her. The librarian had a work for her to do.**

Following his parents’ example, young Chad paid his tithing, subtracted nine dollars for a pair of jeans so that he would have something to wear for school, and then contributed all that remained to the temple fund. Brother Webb’s father had a work for his children to do. They will never forget the lessons they learned through that summer of work.

### Teaching that Changes Lives

These three stories help us see what is most important if we want to help those we teach learn in ways that will change them. These teachers used love to ask their learners to do a work.<sup>3</sup> They knew their names, just as Moroni knew Joseph’s name (see Joseph

Smith—History 1:33). More than knowing their names, they knew their learners’ potential and were not afraid to challenge them to rise to the highest in them.

From President Monson’s account, Sister Gertsch had not planned on visiting Billy’s home that day, but acting on inspiration, she “closed the manual and opened [their] . . . hearts to the glory of God.” The librarian had not planned on asking Sister Dalton to select another book but was prompted the moment she saw her with a romance novel. Brother Webb’s parents likely had not planned to give so much of their earnings to the temple fund, but when the request came, they were inspired to respond and to challenge their children to do the same.<sup>4</sup>

In each case, the lessons helped a young person become stronger in the faith. All three were invited to take action so that they could experience promised blessings.

Rather than just discussing gospel principles with children and students, parents and teachers can help them live

the gospel more fully by asking them to act on what they are learning. As parents and teachers, do we see ourselves as messengers from God who have a work for our children and students to do?

Like Moroni, we who teach young people are preparing them for events that lie ahead of them, such as missions and marriage. Like Moroni, we who teach adults are preparing them to help their children and grandchildren receive all of the blessings God would give them. Like Moroni, we repeat and review. And like Moroni, we give assignments that prepare our students for greater work that lies ahead, and we ask them to teach their newly mastered gospel principle to others.

Moroni used scriptures as he taught Joseph,<sup>5</sup> and his teaching contained the three essential elements of gospel instruction:

- Key doctrine that is pure<sup>6</sup>
- An invitation to action<sup>7</sup>
- Promised blessings

As Moroni quoted from Isaiah, he taught Joseph about the doctrine of the gathering of Israel and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Citing Malachi, he taught that the priesthood would be revealed and that the hearts of the children would turn to their fathers. He told Joseph that his name would be spoken of in all nations (see Joseph Smith—History 1:33, 36–41). All of these powerful blessings would come as a result of Joseph doing the work the Lord had given to him.

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Every parent and teacher in the Church can benefit from Moroni's model of teaching. All teachers can focus on a key doctrine, invite learners to live the doctrine, and bear testimony of the promised blessings that will come into their lives as they embrace gospel principles. All parents and teachers can give their children and students a work to do.

That work might be as simple as asking students to return to their homes and teach their families what they have learned. Or that work might be something more difficult, such as asking students to abandon an old unproductive habit and develop a new positive one. In both instances, the lesson will sink deep into the learner's soul and perhaps change a life. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Thomas S. Monson, "To Learn, to Do, to Be," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 60–62.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Examples of Great Teachers," *Ensign*, June 2007, 108–109.
3. See also *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 31–32.
4. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 41–42.
5. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 54–59.
6. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 52–53.
7. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 74.

