

A TEACHER WHO HELPS SAVE SOULS

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*Why the Savior taught gives meaning to how He taught.
Is our purpose any different?*

I admit that when I think about teaching in the Savior's way, I tend to focus on *how* He taught. What did He do? How did He interact with people? After all, He was the master teacher! But if we want to teach like Him, it's essential to understand *why* He taught. Ultimately, that "why" will make all the difference for us and for those we teach.

When the Savior taught, His purpose wasn't to fill time or to entertain or to unload a bunch of information. Everything He does—including teaching—is meant to lead others to His Father. The Savior's whole desire and mission is to save Heavenly Father's children (see 2 Nephi 26:24). In our quest to teach as He did, we can learn to be motivated by the same purpose that motivated Him.

In other words, to teach in the Savior's way is to be a teacher whose purpose is to help save souls.

The Desire to Save Others

One of my all-time favorite accounts in the Book of Mormon tells of the sons of King Mosiah forsaking the kingdom of the Nephites so that they can establish the kingdom of God among the Lamanites. They give up an earthly kingdom for the

kingdom of heaven. They give up the comforts of safety and security among the Nephites to go among their enemies, the Lamanites, that they "might save some few of their souls" (Alma 26:26).

What motivated these servants of the Lord? "They could not bear that



any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble” (Mosiah 28:3). That motivation caused them to endure “many afflictions” (Alma 17:5, 14).

This story has often inspired me to think, Am I doing what I can to bring others to Christ? Am I focused enough on saving souls?

Becoming a Teacher Who Helps Save Souls

When we desire to teach for the same reason the Savior did, the principles of *how* He teaches take on greater meaning. More than just techniques, they serve as patterns for becoming like Him. As we consistently apply the following ideas, as well as others found in *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, we can not only *teach* more like Him but also *be* more like Him.

Seek Revelation Early

In order to assist in the work of saving souls, we need revelation. Revelation comes “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30)—and that takes time. So we begin preparing early and we seek revelation often.

Love the People

Love may be the most powerful way a teacher can help save souls. It may be as simple as knowing each class member’s name, asking them





about their week, telling them what a good talk they gave, or congratulating them on a milestone or achievement. Showing interest and love opens hearts and helps those we teach be receptive to the Holy Ghost.

Prepare to Teach with the Needs of Learners in Mind

A teacher who helps save souls focuses on the learners. As we review the lesson material, we focus on what will best meet their needs, not ours. We forget about filling time and focus on filling hearts and minds. We think about not just what we will say and do but what learners will say and do. We want them to share their ideas because it builds unity, opens their hearts, and helps them exercise faith.

Stay Focused on the Doctrine

It's common for teachers to evaluate their effectiveness by how much participation they elicit, but that is just one element of the experience. If our class has a lot of sharing but very little doctrine, we have provided what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles called a “theological Twinkie.” We have provided something that tastes good, but we have failed to nourish our class members with the sustaining power of doctrine.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge.”¹ We must help those we teach gain the most important kind of knowledge—the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

When we and class members share our thoughts and feelings, we should always bring it back to the scriptures and to the words of the latter-day prophets. Recently, Brother Tad R. Callister, Sunday School General President, taught: “The ideal teacher is constantly striving to connect class comments to doctrine. For example, a teacher might say, ‘The experience you shared reminds me of a scripture.’ Or, ‘What gospel truths do we learn from the comments we have heard?’ Or, ‘Would someone like to bear testimony of the power of that truth we have been discussing?’”²

Invite the Holy Ghost to Testify

A teacher who helps save souls understands that what we say and do as teachers is intended to invite the influence of the Holy Ghost into the lives of others. The Holy Ghost is the teacher. One role of the Holy Ghost is to testify of truth, especially about the Father and the Son. So as we teach about Them and Their gospel, we invite the Holy Ghost to testify to class members. To the degree that they allow it, His power strengthens their testimonies and changes their hearts. His witness is more powerful than sight.³

Invite Learners to Learn and Act for Themselves

I was recently in a Sunday School class where a teacher began by asking class members to share something that was especially meaningful to them as they read that week’s



assignment from the scriptures and how they had applied it to their lives. This led to a powerful discussion about insights and discoveries they had found for themselves. It was very natural for the teacher to add to this conversation the doctrinal points she had prepared to teach. What really impressed me was how she focused on encouraging her class members to experience the power of the word of God for themselves.

Our goal as teachers isn’t just to have a great experience in class

or to fill the time or to give a good lesson. The real goal is to walk with others on their journey back to our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Our goal is to become teachers who help save souls. ■

Visit teaching.lds.org to learn more about how Teaching in the Savior’s Way and teacher council meetings can change how we learn and teach.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 266.
2. Tad R. Callister, “Sunday School ‘Discussion Is a Means, Not an End,’” *Church News*, June 9, 2016, [deseretnews.com](https://www.deseretnews.com).
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 39.