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Teaching after the Manner of the Spirit

While we are all teachers, we must fully realize that it is the Holy Ghost who is the real teacher and witness of all truth.

Many years ago I was with my companion at the missionary training center when I heard the voice of a child say, “Grandma, are those *real* missionaries?” I turned to see a young girl holding her grandmother’s hand and pointing at me and my companion. I smiled, extended my hand, looked her square in the eye, and said, “Hello, I am Elder Richardson, and we are *real* missionaries.” Her face beamed as she looked at me, thrilled that she was in the company of genuine missionaries.

I walked away from that experience with renewed dedication. I wanted to be the type of missionary that the Savior, my family, and this young girl expected me to be. For the next two years, I worked hard to look like, think like, act like, and especially to teach like a *real* missionary.

Upon my return home, it became increasingly apparent that even though I had left my mission, my mission didn’t leave me. In fact, even after all these years, I still feel that my mission was the best two years *for* my life. One unexpected carryover from my mission was that young girl’s voice. Only now I was hearing

in my mind, “Grandma, is that a *real* priesthood holder?” “Grandma, is that a *real* husband or a *real* father?” or “Grandma, is that a *real* member of the Church?”

I have learned that a key to becoming *real* in every aspect of our lives is our ability to teach in a way that does not restrict learning. You see, a *real life* requires *real learning*, which depends on *real teaching*. “The responsibility to teach [effectively] is not limited to those who have formal callings as teachers.”¹ In fact, every family member, Church leader, and Church member (including the youth and children) has a responsibility to teach.

While we are all teachers, we must fully realize that it is the Holy Ghost who is the *real* teacher and witness of all truth. Those who do not fully understand this either try to take over for the Holy Ghost and do everything themselves, politely invite the Spirit to be with them but only in a supporting role, or believe they are turning all their teaching over to the Spirit when, in truth, they are actually just “winging it.” All parents, leaders, and teachers have the responsibility to teach “by

the Spirit.”² They should not teach “in front of the Spirit” or “behind the Spirit” but “by the Spirit” so the Spirit can teach the truth unrestrained.

Moroni helps us understand how we can teach by the Spirit without replacing, diluting, or dismissing the Holy Ghost as the *real* teacher. Moroni said the Saints conducted their experiences “after the manner of the workings of the Spirit.”³ This requires more than just having the Spirit with us. To conduct ourselves “after the manner” of the Holy Ghost means that we may need to change our way of teaching to emulate the way the Holy Ghost teaches. As we align our manner with the Holy Ghost’s manner, then the Holy Ghost can teach and testify without restraint. This important alignment may be illustrated by the following example.

Many years ago my children and I hiked to the top of South Sister, a 10,358-foot (3,157 m) mountain in Oregon. After several hours we encountered a long 45-degree slope of tiny volcanic pebbles. With the summit in sight, we pressed on only to find that with every step, our feet would sink in the pebbles, causing us to slide backward several inches. My 12-year-old son forged ahead as I stayed with my 8-year-old daughter. Fatigue and discouragement soon set in, and she was heartbroken, thinking that she might not join her brother at the top. My first impulse was to carry her. My spirit was willing, but sadly my flesh was weak. We sat down on the rocks, assessed our situation, and devised a new plan. I told her to put her hands in my back pants pockets, hold on tight, and—most important—as soon as I lifted my foot to take a step, she should quickly put her foot in its place. She mirrored my every move and relied on the lift that came from



hanging on to my pockets. After what seemed like an eternity, we made it to the top of the mountain. Her expression of triumph and satisfaction was priceless. And yes, she and her brother were, in my estimation, *real* hikers.

My daughter's success was a result of her diligent effort and how well she hiked *after the manner* that I hiked. As she synchronized her movement with mine, we achieved a rhythm together, allowing me to utilize my full energy. Such is the case when we teach "after the manner of the workings of the Spirit." As we align the manner of our teaching to match that of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit strengthens us and, at the same time, is not constrained. With this in mind, please consider two fundamental "workings of the Spirit" worthy of our emulation.

First, the Holy Ghost teaches individuals in a very personal way. This makes it possible for us to intimately know truth for ourselves. Because of our different needs, circumstances, and progression, the Holy Ghost teaches what we must know and do so we may become what we must be. Please note that while the Holy Ghost teaches "the truth of all things,"⁴ He does not teach all truth all at once. The Spirit teaches truth "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."⁵

Those who teach after the manner of the Spirit understand they teach people, not lessons. As such, they overcome the urge to cover everything in a manual or teach all they have learned on the subject and focus instead on those things that their

family or class members need to know and do. Parents, leaders, and teachers who mirror how the Spirit teaches learn quickly that *real* teaching involves much more than just talking and telling. As a result, they intentionally pause to listen, carefully observe, and then discern what to do next.⁶ When they do this, the Holy Ghost is in a position to teach both learners and teachers what they should do and say.⁷

Second, the Holy Ghost teaches by inviting, prompting, encouraging, and inspiring us to act. Christ assured us that we come to the truth when we live doctrine and act accordingly.⁸ The Spirit leads, guides, and shows us what to do.⁹ He will not, however, do for us what only we can do for ourselves. You see, the Holy Ghost cannot learn *for* us, feel *for* us, or act *for* us because this would be contrary to the doctrine of agency. He can facilitate opportunities and invite us to learn, feel, and act.

Those who teach after this manner of the Spirit help others by inviting, encouraging, and providing them opportunities to use their agency. Parents, leaders, and teachers realize they cannot feel *for*, learn *for*, or even repent *for* their family, congregation, or class members. Rather than asking, "What can I do for my children, class members, or others?" they ask, "How do I invite and help those around me to learn for themselves?" Parents who mirror the workings of the Holy Ghost create homes where families learn to value rather than just learn about values. In like manner, rather than just talking about doctrines, teachers help learners understand and live gospel doctrines. The Holy Ghost is unrestrained as individuals exercise *their* agency appropriately.

With the current conditions of

the world, we desperately need *real* learning and teaching in our homes, meetings, and gospel classes. I know that your quest to improve may seem overwhelming at times. Please do not become discouraged with your progress. I think back on my experience hiking with my children. We agreed that every time we stopped to catch our breath, rather than focusing exclusively on how much farther we needed to go, we would immediately turn around and look down the mountain. We would take in the scenery and say to each other, “Look how far we’ve come.” Then we would take a deep breath, quickly turn, face uphill, and start climbing again one step at a time. Brothers and sisters, you *can* parent, lead, and teach after the manner of the workings of the Spirit. I know you can do this. I testify you can do this, and lives will change.

My life has been blessed by *real teachers*, who have taught with the Spirit and especially by the Spirit. I invite you to align the manner of your teaching after the manner of the Holy Ghost in all you do. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that His gospel is restored. Because of this we must be *real* parents, *real* leaders, *real* teachers, and *real* learners. I testify God will help you in your efforts, in the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (1999), 3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 50:14.
3. Moroni 6:9.
4. Moroni 10:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 50:14; *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 82.
5. 2 Nephi 28:30.
6. See David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2007, 16–24; *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 60–68.
7. See Luke 12:12.
8. See John 7:17.
9. See 2 Nephi 32:1–5.



By Elder Kazuhiko Yamashita
Of the Seventy

Missionaries Are a Treasure of the Church

I am thankful that missionaries are called by the Lord, that they respond to that call, and that they are serving throughout the world.

One night a number of years ago, a newly called missionary named Elder Swan and his Japanese senior companion came to visit our home. Fortunately I was home, so I invited them in. When I greeted them at the door, my eyes were drawn to the coat that Elder Swan was wearing. Without thinking, I said to him, “That sure is a nice coat you are wearing!” However, it wasn’t a new coat, and it was rather faded. I assumed that the coat was one that a previous missionary had left behind in the missionary apartment.

Elder Swan immediately responded to my words, and it was completely the opposite of what I had been thinking. In halting Japanese he replied, “Yes, this is a good coat. My father wore this coat when he served as a missionary in Japan over 20 years ago.”

His father had served in the Japan Okayama Mission. And when his son was leaving to serve a mission in Japan, he had given his coat to him. This picture shows that coat that two generations of Elder Swans wore in Japan.

I was touched when I heard Elder Swan’s words. And I now understood

why Elder Swan wore his father’s coat while he was proselyting. Elder Swan had embarked on his mission having inherited his father’s love for Japan and its people.

I am sure that some of you have experienced something similar to this. A number of missionaries serving in Japan have told me that their fathers, their mothers, their grandfathers, or their uncles have also served missions in Japan.

I would like to express my sincere love, respect, and feeling of thankfulness for all the returned missionaries who have served around the world. I am sure that those you helped convert have not forgotten you. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings . . . !”¹

I am one of those converts. I was converted at 17, when I was a high school student. The missionary who performed my baptism was an Elder Rupp from Idaho. He was recently released as a stake president in Idaho. I have not seen him since I was newly baptized, but I have exchanged e-mails with him and talked to him by telephone. I have never forgotten him. His