

Understanding THE YOUTH YOU TEACH

*Making an effort to learn about the youth you teach
can unlock the door to their conversion.*

Many young people have enthusiasm and energy that can make teaching and mentoring them a delight. But some may also face challenges as they grow and mature—everything from adjusting to changes in their bodies, to stress at school, to cultural pressures that try to dissuade them from living the gospel. Youth need teachers who understand them and care about them. They need mentors who foster a safe environment for them to learn and act on what they learn.

Here are some things that may be helpful to know about youth as you plan, prepare, and teach them in the Savior's way:

1. *Youth want and need to learn the doctrine.* In a world that is moving further away from the standards of the gospel, youth are starving for eternal truth. They want to be taught “things as they really are, and of things as they really will be” (Jacob 4:13). These things are found in gospel doctrine. As you teach, focus on the doctrine found in the scriptures, the teachings of the living prophets and apostles, and other official Church materials. Encourage the youth to study these resources on their own. Doctrine has a powerful effect (see Alma 31:5).

2. *Youth are establishing their identity.* They are trying to figure out who they are and who they want to become. As they prepare for future roles, they may wonder what the Lord has planned for them and if they will be able to do all that is expected of them. As a parent or teacher, you can inspire confidence about the future and give guidance in preparing for it. Help them grow closer to

God and build their lives on the standards of the gospel. Teach them the importance of the temple and their role in building the kingdom of God.

3. *Youth know when you care.* For youth to truly engage in learning the gospel, they need to know you love them and are interested in them as individuals. Listen



to them. Look for the positive in them and build on that. Express your confidence in them and provide reassurance that they are valued and needed.

4. *Youth have many interests.* Each young person is a unique individual. Get to know their personal interests, needs, and challenges. This may require reaching out to them beyond regularly scheduled meetings, classes, and activities. By getting to know them, you will gain insights and inspiration through the Spirit about their needs that can influence how you teach them. As the youth sense your genuine interest in their lives, their hearts will be more open to your teaching and testimony.

5. *Youth can find answers to their questions.* Learners of all ages enjoy discovering gospel insights, but this is particularly important for adolescents as they develop their values and beliefs. Gospel lessons have lasting impact when they are learned on a personal level—and lived. Instead of

giving youth the answers, you can use teaching methods that invite and inspire them to find their own answers. This will lead to deeper conversion—the ultimate goal of all gospel instruction.

6. *Youth can teach each other.* Youth have an interest in providing input on what is taught and are excited to share what they know. By your example and instruction, you can help them learn to teach in the Savior's way. With your guidance they might begin by teaching a portion of a lesson or leading a short discussion. As they gain experience and confidence, they could have occasional opportunities to teach an entire lesson. When youth learn from each other, they help strengthen one another against pressures from those who don't share their values.

7. *Youth are learning leadership.* Class and quorum presidencies have sacred callings to lead their peers. But even when they've had leadership experience, they'll need guidance from you on how to conduct meetings, help others learn, and minister. Other leadership opportunities may come at home as youth are given meaningful responsibilities.

8. *Youth learn from parents and other adult role models.* An important part of your responsibility as a teacher is to help strengthen the relationship between the youth, their leaders, and their parents. You can help the youth find answers to many of their questions, but some of their questions will be better answered by their parents or leaders. Direct young people to their parents and encourage them to strengthen family bonds. Communicate regularly with parents about what you are studying in class and share the talents, growth, and positive contributions you observe in their sons and daughters. Ask what you can do to help them as they teach their children.

Helping youth become converted requires the combined efforts of parents, leaders, advisers, and teachers, including seminary teachers. Together you will be able to create a much more powerful learning experience for the youth than you could accomplish separately. ■

For more ideas, see "Teach the Youth" in the new manual Teaching in the Savior's Way (online at teaching.lds.org).

