



Gospel Teaching and Learning

*A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders
in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion*

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in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion*

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Preface

“When we begin to analyze ourselves and look to improve ourselves as teachers, what better model could we find? What finer study could we undertake than to analyze our ideas and goals and methods and compare them with those of Jesus Christ?” (Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. [1991], 22).

Teaching in the Savior’s Way

Reflect for a moment on what you know about the Savior. Can you see Him in your mind—with His disciples gathered around Him? Can you see Him teaching the multitudes beside the Sea of Galilee or speaking personally to the woman at the well? What do you notice about His way of teaching and leading? How did He help others learn, grow spiritually, and become converted to His gospel?

He loved them, prayed for them, and continually served them. He found opportunities to be with them and to express His love. He knew their interests, hopes, and desires and what was happening in their lives.

He knew who they were and who they could become. He found unique ways to help them learn and grow—ways meant just for them. When they struggled, He did not give up on them but continued to love them and minister to them.

He prepared Himself to teach by spending time alone in prayer and fasting. In daily, private moments, He sought His Heavenly Father’s guidance.

He used the scriptures to teach and testify about His mission. He taught people to think about scriptures for themselves and use them to find answers to their own questions. Their hearts burned within them as He taught the word of God with power and authority, and they knew for themselves that the scriptures are true.

He shared simple stories, parables, and real-life examples that made sense to them. He helped them discover gospel lessons in their own experiences and in the world around them. He spoke of fishing, of childbirth, of working in the fields. To teach about watching over each other, He told stories about rescuing lost sheep. To teach His disciples to trust Heavenly Father’s tender care, He urged them to “consider the lilies of the field.”

He asked questions that caused them to think and feel deeply. He was sincerely interested in their answers and rejoiced in their expressions of faith. He gave them opportunities to ask their own questions and share their own insights, and He responded to their questions and listened to their experiences. Because of His love, they felt safe sharing their thoughts and personal feelings.



He invited them to testify, and as they did, the Spirit touched their hearts. "Whom say ye that I am?" He asked. As Peter responded, his testimony was strengthened: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

He trusted them, prepared them, and gave them important responsibilities to teach, bless, and serve others. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," He charged them. His purpose was to help them become converted through their service to others.

He invited them to act in faith and live the truths He taught. In all His teaching, He focused on helping His followers live the gospel with all their hearts. To accomplish this, He found opportunities for them to learn through powerful experiences. When He appeared to the Nephites, He invited them to come to Him one by one, that they might see, feel, and know Him for themselves. When

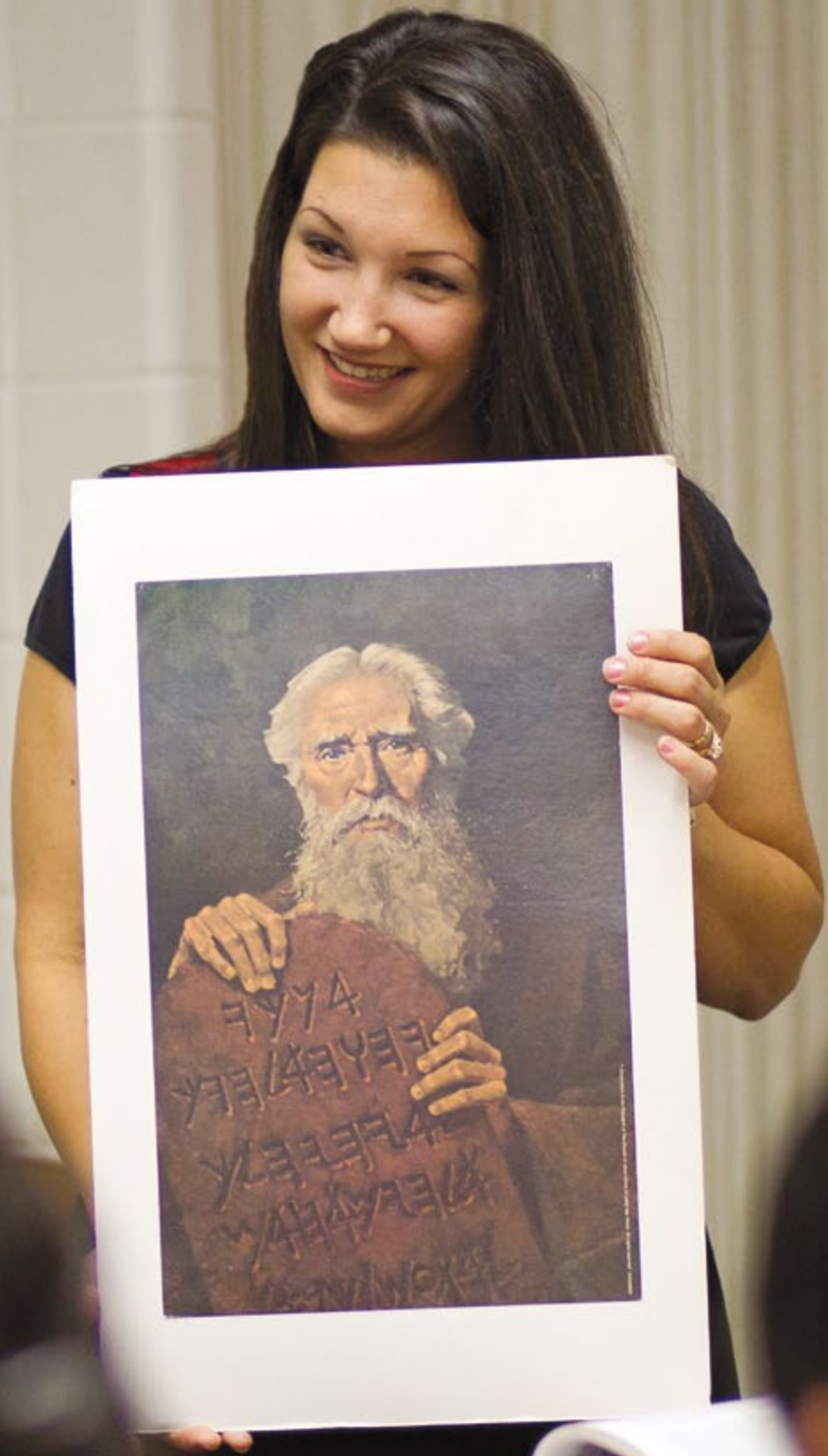


He sensed that they did not fully understand His message, He invited them to go home and prepare themselves to come back and learn more.

In every setting, He was their example and mentor. He taught them to pray by praying with them. He taught them to love and serve by the way He loved and served them. He taught them how to teach His gospel by the way He taught it.

Clearly, the Savior's way of teaching is different from the world's way.

This, then, is your sacred calling—to teach as the Savior taught. As you do, the youth will give place in their hearts for the seed of the gospel to be planted, to swell, and to grow. This will lead to conversion—the ultimate goal of your teaching. As you help youth become converted, you help them prepare to follow the Savior throughout their lives—to serve missions, receive temple ordinances, raise righteous families, and build God's kingdom in all the world.



Introduction

The Church Educational System

The Church Educational System (CES) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operates under the direction of the Board of Education and the Boards of Trustees of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members of the First Presidency, selected members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and other General Authorities and general officers of the Church are members of the Board of Education.

Individual entities within the Church Educational System include Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University–Idaho, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, and LDS Business College.

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) provides weekday religious education for youth and young adults. Seminaries and Institutes of Religion also supervises elementary and secondary schools in some areas outside the United States.

In Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, our task is not just education—it is religious education. Religious education has eternal implications and requires the influence of the Spirit of the Lord. Speaking to seminary and institute teachers, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught: “You teachers have a great mission. As teachers you stand upon the highest peak in education, for what teaching can compare in priceless value and in far-reaching effect with that which deals with man as he was in the eternity of yesterday, as he is in the mortality of today, and as he will be in the forever of tomorrow” (The Charted Course of the Church in Education, rev. ed. [1994], 9).

Thousands of seminary and institute teachers and leaders throughout the world are helping the youth and young adults of the Church learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and live according to its principles.

To assist teachers in their efforts, this Gospel Teaching and Learning handbook has been provided. It is a resource book. Teachers should be familiar with its contents and refer to it again and again, focusing on those areas that would be of greatest help to them. As teachers study this handbook and seek direction from the Lord, He will inspire them in their preparation, strengthen their relationships with students, magnify their teaching, and bless them with the Spirit to more fully accomplish His work.

The Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

Our purpose is to help youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.

To achieve our purpose:

Live

We live the gospel of Jesus Christ and strive for the companionship of the Spirit. Our conduct and relationships are exemplary in the home, in the classroom, and in the community. We continually seek to improve our performance, knowledge, attitude, and character.

Teach

We teach students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets. These doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to understanding and edification. We help students fulfill their role in the learning process and prepare them to teach the gospel to others.

Administer

We administer our programs and resources appropriately. Our efforts assist parents in their responsibility to strengthen their families. We work closely with priesthood leaders as we invite students to participate and as we provide a spiritual environment where students can associate with one another and learn together.

The Objective

Teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ have been given a sacred trust. Their purpose goes beyond simply teaching lessons. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, “A gospel teacher will never be satisfied with just delivering a message or preaching a sermon. A superior gospel teacher wants to assist in the Lord’s work to bring eternal life to His children” (“Gospel Teaching,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 80).

The Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion provides clear direction to teachers and leaders regarding their efforts to assist in the Lord’s work.

Our Purpose [1.1]

Our purpose is to help youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.

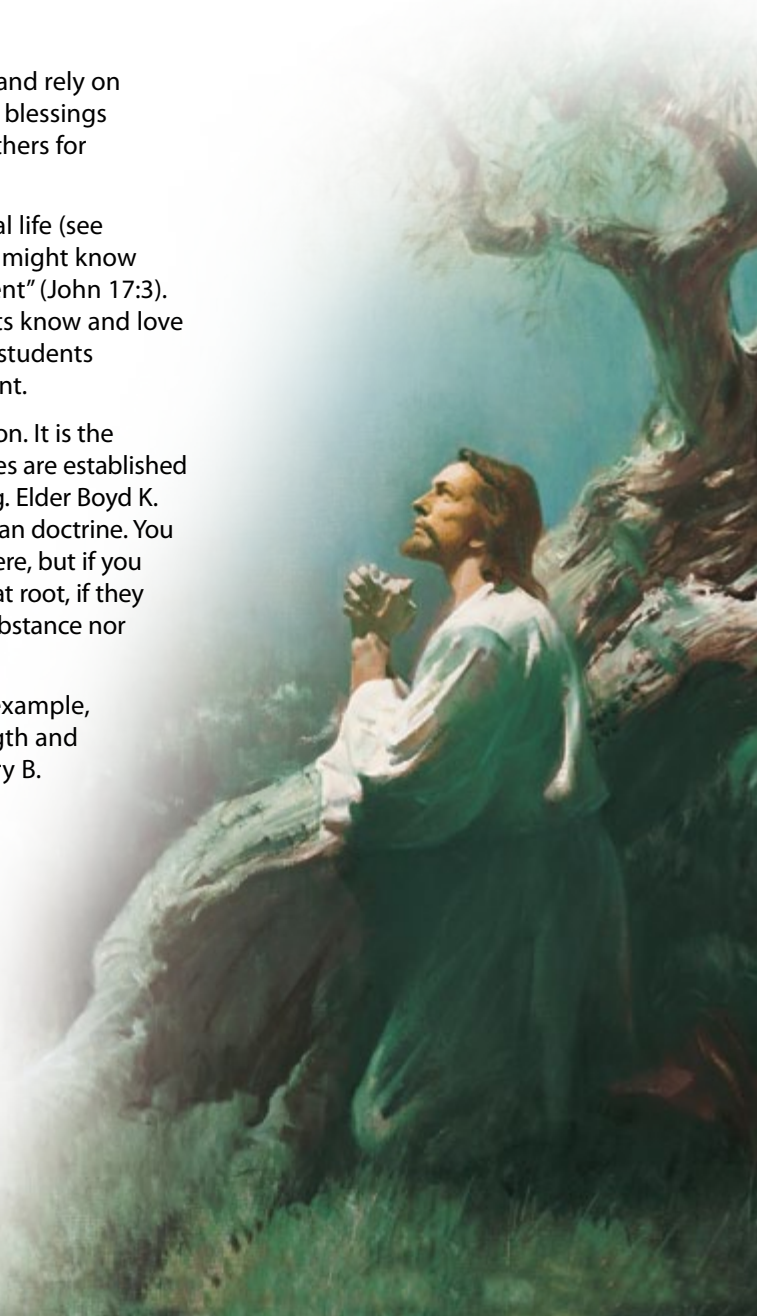
Heavenly Father desires that each of His children gain eternal life (see Moses 1:39). The Savior taught: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Therefore, the focus of religious education is to help students know and love their Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to help students understand and rely on the Savior’s teachings and Atonement.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is central to the plan of salvation. It is the fundamental truth upon which gospel doctrines and principles are established and should be at the heart of all gospel teaching and learning. Elder Boyd K. Packer testified that the Atonement “is the very root of Christian doctrine. You may know much about the gospel as it branches out from there, but if you only know the branches and those branches do not touch that root, if they have been cut free from that truth, there will be no life nor substance nor redemption in them” (“The Mediator,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 56).

As students learn of Jesus Christ, follow His teachings and example, and apply His Atonement in their lives, they can gain strength and experience forgiveness, healing, and conversion. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught:

“We must raise our sights. We must keep the goals we have always had: enrollment, regular attendance, graduation, knowledge of the scriptures, the experience of feeling the Holy Ghost confirm truth. In addition, we must aim for the mission field and the temple. But students need more during the time they are our students. . . .

“The pure gospel of Jesus Christ must go down into the hearts of students by the power of the Holy Ghost. . . .



“As we teach our young people to love the Savior Jesus Christ, they will become true disciples of the Master. This process will prepare them to become loyal, loving husbands and fathers, wives and mothers—leaders of eternal families. The temples will become a natural and important part of their lives. They will become missionaries, serving the Lord on missions as young adults and later as mature couples. . . . As we strengthen our youth by pointing them to Christ, we also strengthen families and the Church.”



(Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “A Teacher of God’s Children” [an evening with President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Jan. 28, 2011], 3)

Our aim must be for them to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us” (“We Must Raise Our Sights” [CES conference on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 14, 2001], 2).

True conversion leads to the highest blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are made possible through the ordinances of the temple. As students faithfully make and keep temple covenants, they will qualify for those blessings that include exaltation and eternal families. They will experience added spiritual strength, greater peace, and additional personal revelation.

Students who center their lives on the Savior and the temple can obtain greater protection against the enticements and deceptions of the world and be better prepared to accomplish all that Father in Heaven may ask of them. They can have the strength to remain firmly on the path that leads to eternal life and can better assist their families and others in finding and following this same path of discipleship.

Horizontal lines for student writing.

Live [1.2]

We live the gospel of Jesus Christ and strive for the companionship of the Spirit. [1.2.1]

One of the greatest contributions a teacher can make toward helping students accomplish the purpose outlined in the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes is consistent and faithful obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. As teachers strive to develop Christlike character and seek to know and please Heavenly Father in every aspect of their lives, they are blessed with a measure of divine power that can influence the way the gospel message is received and understood by their students.

When teachers faithfully live the gospel, they qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. This companionship is crucial to the success of teachers in seminaries and institutes. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord stresses “if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). Elder Robert D. Hales counseled: “The responsibilities of teachers in seminary and institute of religion are many, but in order to meet these responsibilities, teachers must first strive for personal righteousness. As teachers, we must live the gospel in such a way that we will have the Spirit to ever be with us” (“Teaching by Faith” [an evening with Elder Robert D. Hales, Feb. 1, 2002], 1).

Our conduct and relationships are exemplary in the home, in the classroom, and in the community. [1.2.2]

Teachers have a responsibility to conduct their lives with integrity and to be worthy examples of the doctrines and principles they teach. In all circumstances, teachers should speak, serve, and live in a way that is consistent with a person who loves the Lord and has the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Notes

improvement" ("The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest" [an evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 6, 1998], 3).

In seminary and institute, teachers should continually seek to improve their performance, knowledge, attitude, and character.

Performance. Teachers should regularly seek to improve their performance in teaching and administrative responsibilities. They can do so through a balanced, steady, and diligent effort to understand and apply fundamental principles and skills. Seeking help from seminary and institute materials and from supervisors, colleagues, students, priesthood leaders, and others will help teachers and leaders obtain a more accurate assessment of their performance, as well as the guidance necessary to help them improve where needed most.

Knowledge. Teachers should consistently strive to study the context, content, and doctrines and principles contained in the scriptures and the words of the prophets. As they do, they will grow in their understanding of the Savior's gospel and Atonement and will be better able to bless the lives of their students. Teachers should develop their knowledge and understanding of the principles and effective methods of teaching that are contained in the scriptures as well as in seminary and institute materials. They should also be familiar with principles of appropriate administration (see section 1.4, "Administer" on page 7) and understand policies and practices of seminaries and institutes.

Attitude. The attitude teachers have determines to a great degree their own happiness and the ability they have to influence their students for good. Teachers who continually strive to be of good cheer (see D&C 68:6), seek to serve others, work to achieve unity, and make the best of challenging situations will bless the lives of the students and colleagues with whom they associate.

Character. Teachers who strive to live the gospel and who consistently and genuinely try to improve their performance, knowledge, and attitude will naturally develop the character necessary to assist in accomplishing the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes. Elder Richard G. Scott taught:

"We become what we want to be by consistently being what we want to become each day. Righteous character is a precious manifestation of what you are becoming. . . . Righteous character is more valuable than any material object you own, any knowledge you have gained through study, or any goals you have attained" ("The Transforming Power of Faith and Character," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2010, 43).

Ultimately, the key in seeking to improve our performance, knowledge, attitude, and character lies in following the example of Jesus Christ. President Howard W. Hunter said, "It is the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Christ that shapes our behavior and forms our character in all areas of our life—personally, within the home, in our professions and community life, as well as in our devotion to the Church that bears his name" ("Standing as Witnesses of God," Ensign, May 1990, 60).

"None of us, my brethren and sisters, knows enough. The learning process is an endless process. We must read, we must observe, we must assimilate, and we must ponder that to which we expose our minds."



(Gordon B. Hinckley, "Four Imperatives for Religious Educators," 2)

"If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. . . . And my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."



(Ether 12:27)

students learn how to take an active role in their spiritual learning by encouraging them to:

- Develop a habit of daily scripture study.
- Prepare their hearts and minds for the influence of the Spirit.
- Discover and express doctrines and principles that are relevant to their personal lives.
- Deepen understanding of the scriptures through diligent study, meditation, and prayer.
- Ask questions and seek for answers that help them better understand the gospel and how it applies to their lives.
- Share insights, experiences, and feelings.
- Explain gospel doctrines and principles to others and testify of their truthfulness.
- Develop scripture study skills, such as marking, cross-referencing, and using the scripture study aids.

Notes

By fulfilling their role in spiritual learning, students manifest their willingness to be taught by the Holy Ghost. They are often more committed to and excited about the scriptures. They understand and recall saving doctrines and principles more clearly and are more likely to apply what they have been taught. As students discover gospel doctrines and principles, ask questions, and share responses, they also learn valuable skills for studying on their own.

Through such participation, students will be enabled to teach the gospel more effectively to their families, friends, and others. They will also be better prepared to teach the doctrines and principles of the gospel in the future as missionaries, parents, teachers, and leaders in the Church.



“[The students’] decision to participate is an exercise in agency that permits the Holy Ghost to communicate a personalized message suited to their individual needs. Creating an atmosphere of participation enhances the probability that the Spirit will teach more important lessons than you can communicate.

“That participation will bring into their lives the direction of the Spirit.”

(Richard G. Scott, “To Learn and to Teach More Effectively,” in Brigham Young University 2007–2008 Speeches [2008], 4–5)

Administer [1.4]

We administer our programs and resources appropriately. [1.4.1]

Administering may be defined as both leading and serving people as well as directing and managing programs and resources. As the perfect example in all things, Jesus Christ modeled the divine attributes of a true leader. No matter what their current assignment may be, all leaders and teachers in seminary and institute have the opportunity and responsibility to both lead and manage in a Christlike manner.

Attributes of charity, vision, and humility allow us to accomplish the Lord’s work as He would desire. Charity, or the pure love of Christ, should be the basis of a teacher’s relationship with students, priesthood leaders, parents, colleagues, and supervisors. Charity is not merely a feeling but a manner of acting and being (see Moroni 7:45). A leader with vision gives inspired direction, creates a sense of purpose, and instills enthusiasm in those around him. The scriptures teach that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). Humility allows administrators and teachers to recognize their dependence on the Lord and encourages them to work cooperatively

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“And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

(Moroni 7:45)



with others to accomplish the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes. The Lord said, “No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care” (D&C 12:8).

Every teacher and leader has the opportunity and responsibility to direct and manage programs and resources appropriately. Administrative responsibilities are for the spiritual purpose of blessing individuals. “Preparing budgets, completing reports, caring for Church property and resources, ensuring safety, overseeing programs, . . . participating in councils, [and communicating with students, parents, and priesthood leaders] are all essential administrative duties (Administering Appropriately: A Handbook for CES Leaders and Teachers [2003], 2). Elder Henry B. Eyring taught, “Never, never underestimate the spiritual value of doing temporal things well for those whom you serve” (“The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life” [CES symposium on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 17, 1990], 7).

Our efforts assist parents in their responsibility to strengthen their families. [1.4.2]

Parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children the gospel of Jesus Christ; to oversee their social development, interpersonal relationships, and dress and grooming standards; and to answer their doctrinal questions. Church leaders assist parents in this responsibility.

Seminary and institute leaders and teachers primarily assist parents by teaching students the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets, emphasizing the doctrinal importance of the family and the high priority that family members and family activities deserve (see Administering Appropriately, 4). Teachers should encourage students to honor their parents and to seek their parents’ counsel and guidance. Teachers could also share with parents what is being taught in class.

We work closely with priesthood leaders as we invite students to participate and as we provide a spiritual environment where students can associate with one another and learn together. [1.4.3]

All programs within Seminaries and Institutes of Religion operate under the direction of both general and local priesthood leaders who hold the appropriate priesthood keys.

In their efforts to bless the youth and young adults, it is important that seminary and institute leaders and teachers work closely and cooperatively with local priesthood leaders. Under the direction of priesthood leaders, they counsel and work together to ensure that each youth and young adult is invited and encouraged to enroll in, attend, and complete appropriate courses of study. Teachers and administrators should be actively involved with priesthood leaders in seeking to enroll and retain seminary and institute students and should not be content to teach only those students who come to their classes.

Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning

The Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion suggests three primary teaching aims that administrators and teachers seek to achieve in order to fulfill the purpose of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion:

1. We teach students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets.
2. These doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to understanding and edification.
3. We help students fulfill their role in the learning process and prepare them to teach the gospel to others.

To help achieve these aims, teachers and students in seminary and institute are specifically encouraged to implement the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning.

Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning

Teachers and students should—

- Teach and learn by the Spirit.
- Cultivate a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose.
- Study the scriptures daily, and read the text for the course.
- Understand the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets.
- Identify, understand, feel the truth and importance of, and apply gospel doctrines and principles.
- Explain, share, and testify of gospel doctrines and principles.
- Master key scripture passages and the Basic Doctrines.

These principles, practices, and outcomes are interconnected. When implemented wisely and in harmony with each other, these fundamentals contribute to the students' ability to understand the scriptures and the doctrines and principles they contain. They also encourage students to take an active role in their learning of the gospel and increase students' ability to live the gospel and teach it to others.

Teach and Learn by the Spirit [2.1]

Gospel teaching and learning takes place through the power of the Holy Ghost. Teaching and learning by the Spirit occurs when the Holy Ghost is performing His role or functions with the teacher, with the student, or with both. Only through teaching and learning by the Spirit will students come to understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ in such a way that they may qualify for eternal life.

Notes

Teachers and students who love the Lord and who know of His love for them feel a genuine desire to be close to Him and to become more like Him. They respect and reverence His word and the words of His prophets in ways that motivate them to study the scriptures diligently, to apply what they learn, and to share what they are learning with others.



When students know they are loved and respected by their teacher and other students, they are more likely to come to class ready to learn. The acceptance and love they feel from others can soften their hearts, reduce fear, and engender within them the desire and confidence necessary to share their experiences and feelings with their teacher and other class members.

Teachers can nurture students' feelings of love and respect for the Lord by helping them understand the Atonement, by teaching them of their divine nature and infinite worth to Heavenly Father and His Son, and by speaking and testifying of Them in an appropriate and reverent manner.

Teachers should develop the love and respect they have for their students. Doing so will help them radiate the pure love of Christ for their students and help them teach with

patience and compassion. Teachers can learn students' names and seek to know of their interests, talents, challenges, and abilities. They can pray for their students, collectively and individually. Teachers can personally welcome each student to class and give every student an opportunity to participate. They should listen carefully as students ask questions or share their thoughts or feelings. In addition, teachers might attend performances, athletic contests, or other events where their students are participating. In their efforts to love their students, teachers should not try to take the place of parents or priesthood leaders or to become personal counselors to the students.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.



"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

(1 Corinthians 13:1-2)

Most teachers will have students in their classes who, to some degree, have limited abilities or physical or mental disabilities. They too are children of Heavenly Father and need to learn the gospel regardless of personal challenges or limitations experienced in mortality. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement" (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 210). Teachers need to be sensitive to all students and consider their individual needs and abilities as they prepare and present their lessons.

One of the most helpful things teachers can do to develop genuine love for their students is to seek the gift of charity through sincere prayer. The prophet Mormon taught:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:48).

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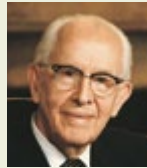
Elder Richard G. Scott implored: "Please kindle a love of the scriptures in the mind and heart of each precious youth. Help ignite within each youth that flame of unquenchable fire that motivates those who have felt it with a desire to know evermore of the word of the Lord, to understand his teachings, to apply them, and to share them with others. . . .

"First, walk with your students step-by-step through many passages of the sacred word of the Lord. Help them feel your enthusiasm, respect, and love for the scriptures.

"Second, help them learn to read, ponder, and pray privately to discover the power and peace that flow from the scriptures" ("Four Fundamentals for Those Who Teach and Inspire Youth" [CES symposium on the Old Testament, Aug. 14, 1987], 5).

"Before you can strengthen your students, it is essential that you study the doctrines of the kingdom and learn the gospel by both study and faith."

(Ezra Taft Benson, "The Gospel Teacher and His Message" [address to CES religious educators, Sept. 17, 1976], 3)



There are few things teachers can do that will have a more powerful and long-lasting influence for good in the lives of their students than helping them learn to love the scriptures and to study them on a daily basis. This often begins as teachers set an example of daily scripture study in their own lives. Engaging in meaningful, personal scripture study every day qualifies teachers to offer personal testimony to their students of the value of the scriptures in their own lives. Such testimony can be an important catalyst in helping students commit to studying the scriptures regularly on their own.

Teachers should consistently teach students the doctrines and principles behind daily personal scripture study. Teachers can also encourage each student to set aside time every day for personal scripture study; help students be accountable for their daily study by using an appropriate tracking system that measures their performance; and give students regular opportunities in class to share with each other some of the things they are learning and feeling in their personal scripture study. As teachers encourage daily scripture study, they should be careful to not embarrass or discourage any students who may struggle to study the scriptures on their own.

"Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life."

(Doctrine and Covenants 84:85)



Students with reading or other learning disabilities should be given the option to study the scriptures in a format that may be better suited for their needs, such as audio, American Sign Language, or Braille. Many students who have difficulty reading benefit from following along on the printed page while someone else is reading aloud.

Scripture-study skills and methods

To help students be successful in their personal study of the scriptures, teachers can assist them in developing and utilizing a variety of scripture-study skills and methods. All of the following skills and methods, as well as others not addressed in this handbook, should be directed at helping students to learn by the Spirit, understand the scriptures, and discover and apply gospel doctrines and principles in their lives.

Use scripture study aids. The Church has prepared an extensive set of scripture study aids and included them in the standard works for some languages. (The Guide to the Scriptures is a group of study aids that has

been prepared for other languages.) These aids include such things as footnotes, chapter headings, topical indexes, the Bible Dictionary, and maps. They are some of the most valuable helps teachers and students can use as they study the scriptures. Teachers can help their students become familiar with these study aids and resources by using them appropriately during class. The Church has also made other helpful study resources available online.

Notes

Mark and annotate. One of the most helpful ways for teachers and students to capture and retain the things they learn is by marking and annotating the scriptures. To mark means to designate, distinguish, set apart, or bring attention to. This can be done by underlining, shading, or outlining key words or passages in the scriptures. To annotate means to add explanatory notes or commentary. Examples of scriptural annotations could include writing personal impressions, prophetic commentary, cross-references, word definitions, or insights gained from the comments of class members in the margins next to specific scripture passages.

Scripture marking and annotating can help students and teachers to:

- Make important words, phrases, ideas, truths, people, and events easier to remember and find.
- Clarify and discover meaning in the scriptural text.
- Preserve personal insights gained and those received from others.
- Prepare to teach the gospel to others.

Teachers can encourage students to mark their scriptures by saying something like, “As you search these verses, I invite you to mark a key principle that you discover,” or “Here is an important cross-reference. You may want to write this in the margin of your scriptures.” It is better to teach, illustrate, and practice the basic elements of scripture marking throughout the year than to teach a particular marking system.

Ponder. Pondering means to meditate or think deeply about something, and often includes prayer. As students learn to ponder during their personal scripture study, the Spirit will often reveal truth to them and help them know how they can become more like Jesus Christ.

After teaching the Nephites, the Savior told them, “Ponder upon the things which I have said” (3 Nephi 17:3). One way to help students participate spiritually in the lesson and to encourage them to apply and deepen their understanding of what they are learning is to give them time in class to meditate about what they have learned. At such times, teachers should encourage students to ask for help from the Lord.



“Invite [your students] to read more slowly and more carefully and with more questions in mind. Help them to ponder, to examine every word, every scriptural gem. Teach them to hold it up to the light and turn it, look and see what’s reflected and refracted there. For some student, on a given day with a given need, such an examination may unearth a treasure hidden in a field: a pearl of great price; a pearl beyond price.”



(Jeffrey R. Holland, “Students Need Teachers to Guide Them” [CES satellite broadcast, June 20, 1992], 4)

Ask questions. Learning to ask questions and seek for answers as they study the scriptures is one of the most important scripture-study skills students can develop. By asking questions, students can be led to a better understanding of the context and content of the scriptures, as well as to the discovery and understanding of important doctrines and principles of the gospel. Students can learn to ask questions that will lead them to feel the truth and importance of what they are studying and to know how to apply what they are learning.

Define difficult words and phrases. Dictionaries, student manuals, footnotes, and scripture study helps can often help students understand difficult words or phrases.

Visualize. Visualizing occurs as students picture in their minds what is taking place in the scriptural account. For example, students could imagine Peter walking on the water toward the Savior (see Matthew 14:28–29), or Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego being cast into the fiery furnace (see Daniel 3:19–25). Visualizing can help make a scriptural account more vivid and real for the students.

Liken scriptures. To liken the scriptures is to compare them to one’s own life. Students can ask, “What circumstances and situations in my life are like the circumstances and situations in this passage of scripture?” or “How am I like the characters we are studying in the scriptures?” As students see the similarities between their experiences and those in the scriptures, they are better able to identify doctrines and principles of the gospel. They can also see how these principles can be applied in similar situations in their own lives.

Cross-reference. A cross-reference is an additional scripture reference that can provide added information and insight on the passage being studied. Cross-referencing or “linking” is connecting scripture references that help students understand a scripture passage or a doctrine or principle. Helpful cross-references can be found in the footnotes and other study aids, teacher and student manuals, and general conference talks. Teachers and students can also discover relevant cross-references in their own study.

Compare and contrast. A passage of scripture or a doctrine or principle is often clarified when it is compared or contrasted with something else. Noting the similarities or differences between teachings, people, or events can bring gospel truths into sharper focus. For example, contrasting the reign of King Benjamin with that of King Noah allows students to see very clearly the blessing of a righteous leader versus the destructive results of a wicked one. Comparing the lives, teachings, and testimonies of Jacob and Alma with the philosophies and lives of Sherem and Korihor can help students more easily recognize false philosophies in the world today and see how to combat them. Comparing and contrasting the various journeys to lands of promise made by the children of Israel, Lehi and his family, and the Jaredites can teach principles that help teachers and students in their own journeys through life.

Horizontal lines for student writing.

Make lists. A list is a series of related thoughts, ideas, or instructions. Looking for lists in the scriptures can help teachers and students identify key points the writer is emphasizing. For example, the Ten Commandments are a list (see Exodus 20). The Beatitudes can be seen as a list (see Matthew 5:3–12; 3 Nephi 12:3–11). Doctrine and Covenants 4 contains a list of the qualifications of those who are called to serve the Lord.

Look for connections, patterns, and themes. Students can be encouraged to look for connections, patterns, and themes as they study the scriptures. Elder David A. Bednar said, “Searching in the revelations for connections, patterns, and themes builds upon and adds to our spiritual knowledge . . . ; it broadens our perspective and understanding of the plan of salvation” (“A Reservoir of Living Water” [CES fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007], 2).

Teachers and students will generally use many of these skills and methods in class during the year. As they do so, teachers may occasionally pause and briefly discuss with their students the method or skill being used and encourage them to use it in their personal study.

Notes

Read the Text for the Course [2.3.2]

All of the standard works—the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—are inspired writings that contain doctrines and principles of the gospel. They illustrate the workings of God with man and teach about the Atonement of Jesus Christ. They are important individually, and collectively they give a greater understanding of the gospel and the plan of salvation prepared by our Father in Heaven.

Students and teachers should read and study the entire book of scripture that corresponds with each course of study (with the exception of selected portions of the Old Testament, as noted in the curriculum).

Understand the Context and Content of the Scriptures and the Words of the Prophets [2.4]

Understanding the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets prepares teachers and students to recognize the messages of the inspired authors. The context and content clarifies and illustrates gospel doctrines and principles recorded in the experiences and teachings of others. Although much of what follows addresses understanding the context and content of the scriptures specifically, most of the same principles and ideas can be applied to a study of the words and messages of latter-day prophets.



“Throughout the ages, Father in Heaven has inspired select men and women to find, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, solutions to life’s most perplexing problems. He has inspired those authorized servants to record those solutions as a type of handbook for those of His children who have faith in His plan of happiness and in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We have ready access to this guidance through the treasure we call the standard works—that is, the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.”

(Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 6)

Notes

Context [2.4.1]

Context is (1) the passages of scripture that precede or follow a verse or series of verses or (2) the circumstances that surround or give background to a particular scriptural passage, event, or story.

The context is a means to understand the content of the scriptures. It provides background information that clarifies and brings a depth of understanding to the stories, teachings, doctrines, and principles in the scriptural text. Each scripture writer wrote as he was directed by the Holy Ghost, yet the writings were clothed in the imagery and culture of the writer. To understand their writings, teachers and students should mentally "step into their world" as much as possible to see things as the writer saw them. Following are some examples of different types of context.

"Become acquainted with the lessons the scriptures teach. Learn the background and setting of the Master's parables and the prophets' admonitions. Study them as though they were speaking to you, for such is the truth."



(Thomas S. Monson, "Be Your Best Self," Ensign or Liahona, May 2009, 68)

Historical setting. Recognizing that Joseph Smith was in Liberty Jail during the receiving and writing of sections 121, 122, and 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants gives added depth and power to the doctrines and principles taught in those sections concerning such things as adversity and the use of power and authority.

Cultural setting. Knowing the background of the feast days and holidays of ancient Israel can clarify how they relate symbolically to the Savior and His mission. Being aware of the origin of the Samaritans and how the Jews felt about them at the time of Christ illuminates the parable of the Good Samaritan and deepens the meaning of the Savior's

encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria.

The question or situation that prompted the parable, event, doctrine, or principle. Understanding that Doctrine and Covenants 9 came as a response to Oliver Cowdery's inability to translate clarifies the principles concerning revelation taught in that section.

"I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer . . . ?"



(Joseph Smith, in History of the Church, 5:261)

Who is speaking to whom and why. Alma's teachings on the Atonement, Resurrection, Judgment, mercy, and justice take on a deeper meaning when we realize that the context of those teachings was a visit with his son Corianton, who was concerned about the consequences of serious sins he had committed.

Geographic setting. Knowing the geography of Canaan deepens our understanding of where Lot and Abraham settled, how it influenced choices they made, and how

these choices affected their families.

The scriptures, the study aids provided in the scriptures, and the curriculum generally contain sufficient contextual information to assist teachers and students in understanding the scriptural content.

Content [2.4.2]

The content is the story line, people, events, sermons, and inspired explanations that make up the scriptural text. The content of the scriptures gives life and relevance to the doctrines and principles that are found in the

Sometimes in class, doctrines and principles will be pointed out by the teacher. Other times the teacher will guide, encourage, and allow students to discover them for themselves. Teachers should diligently help students acquire the ability to identify doctrines and principles on their own.

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Some gospel doctrines and principles are easier to identify because they are stated overtly. Such stated principles are often prefaced by phrases such as “thus we see,” “therefore,” “wherefore,” or “behold,” indicating that the scriptural author may be summarizing his message or drawing a conclusion.

For example, Helaman 3:27 says, “Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name.”

Alma 12:10 states, “Therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word.”

Ephesians 6:13 teaches, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Alma 41:10 includes, “Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.”

Many principles are not stated directly by the scriptural writer but are instead implied. Implied principles may come from an entire book of scripture, a chapter, or a single verse and may be couched in the scriptural story line, events, or parables. Identifying implied principles includes recognizing the truths being illustrated in a scriptural account and stating them clearly and succinctly. This often requires time and careful thought. Elder Richard G. Scott taught, “It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle” (“Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” 86).

Implied principles can often be discovered by looking for cause-and-effect relationships within the scripture block. By analyzing the actions, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals or groups in the scriptural account, and identifying the blessings or consequences that came as a result, gospel principles become more apparent.

Implied principles can also be identified by asking questions like:

- What is the moral or point of the story?
- Why do you think the writer included these events or passages?
- What did the author intend for us to learn?
- What are some of the fundamental truths taught in this passage?

Some examples of implied principles include:

From the events in the lives of Alma the Younger or Paul: A person who accepts the truth and repents of his sins can lead others to the blessings of the gospel (see Alma 36:10–21; Acts 9:4–20).

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From the parable of the ten virgins: If we have faithfully prepared ourselves spiritually, we will be ready when the Lord comes; or those who neglect their spiritual preparation will not be received by the Lord at His coming (see Matthew 25:1–13).



From the story of David and Goliath: As we act with courage and faith in God, we can overcome great challenges in our lives (see 1 Samuel 17:40–51).

Some ways to help students learn to identify principles and doctrines are:

- Invite students to write the concept they are learning in an “if-then” relationship statement.
- Assign students to write “and thus we see” statements to summarize the truths they have learned.
- Have students identify actions that were taken by individuals in the scripture block and search for the blessings or consequences that resulted.
- Encourage students to underline in their scriptures key words or phrases that identify principles and doctrinal statements.
- Write a doctrine or principle from the scripture block on the board. Ask students to search the block, looking for evidence of that principle.

As principles and doctrines are identified, it is important that they are clearly and simply stated. “To be known, the truth must be stated and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better the opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true’ [New Witnesses for God, 3 vols. (1909), 2:vii]” (B. H. Roberts, in James E. Faust, “What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves on His Mission,” Ensign, May 1996, 41; Preach My Gospel [2004], 182).

Writing an identified principle or doctrine on the board, or inviting students to write or underline it in their scriptures, is one way to help make these truths clear in the minds of class members.

Understand Doctrines and Principles [2.5.2]

To understand a gospel doctrine or principle means that students comprehend the identified truths, their relationship with other principles and doctrines in the Lord’s plan, and in what circumstances the principle might be applied in their lives. When a teacher or a student understands a doctrine or principle, they not only know what the words mean but also how the doctrine or principle can affect their lives. Once a doctrine or principle is identified and understood, it can be more readily applied.

Teachers and students can increase their understanding of gospel doctrines and principles by searching the scriptures for related teachings and additional insights, by turning to the words and teachings of latter-day prophets and apostles, by explaining to others gospel truths they are learning, and by praying for the help of the Holy Ghost. Understanding continues to deepen as principles are applied.

Teachers can help students understand doctrines and principles by asking questions that lead students to analyze their meaning. For example, from the story of the 2,000 stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon, we can learn the principle that if we do not doubt, God will deliver us (see Alma 56:47–48). In order to gain a greater understanding of what this principle means, teachers and students could consider such questions as:

- What is it that the stripling warriors did not doubt?
- What evidence is there that these young warriors did not doubt?
- How did God deliver the stripling warriors?
- What are some “battles” the youth of the Church are fighting today?
- What are some ways God might deliver them from such battles?
- What does the experience of Abinadi, Joseph Smith, or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego teach us about what it means to be delivered?

From the story of Naaman and Elisha in the Old Testament, we can learn the principle that if we are humble and willing to follow the counsel of the prophet, we can be healed (see 2 Kings 5:1–14). In order to understand what this principle means, teachers and students could consider such questions as:

- How does humility help us follow the counsel of the prophet?
- How does Naaman’s eventual willingness to “wash seven times” help us understand what it means to truly follow the counsel of the prophet?
- What things besides physical illness may we need to be healed of today?
- What are some things the prophets have asked us to do that will heal us spiritually but may not make sense to the world?

Feel the Truth and Importance of Doctrines and Principles [2.5.3]

Although students may identify and understand principles and doctrines of the gospel, they will often not apply them until they feel their truth and importance through the Spirit and sense some degree of urgency to incorporate the principle in their own lives. Elder Robert D Hales explained, “A true teacher, once he has taught the facts [of the gospel] . . . , takes [the students] a step further to gain the spiritual witness and the understanding in their hearts that brings about the action and the doing” (“Teaching by Faith” [an evening with Elder Robert D. Hales, Feb. 1, 2002], 5).

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heart (see Proverbs 3:5) and have been strengthened and comforted in a time of adversity or trial have a clearer understanding of that principle than those who have not.

Teachers should give students time in class to meditate on, ponder, or write about what they have understood and felt, and to consider what specific actions they should take to apply it in their lives. At such times, teachers should encourage students to ask for guidance and direction from the Lord. Teachers can also discuss situations students might experience and have them share ideas about how applying gospel principles in those situations would bless their lives. They can suggest that students set a goal that can help them live the principle being taught. Teachers could prepare a scripture, quotation, poem, or part of a hymn as a handout that students can take home as a reminder of the principle.

There may be times when the teacher or students in the class offer suggestions as to how gospel principles could be applied. Such examples can give students helpful ideas of ways to apply principles of the gospel in their everyday lives. However, teachers should be careful not to be too prescriptive in assigning specific applications for students. Remember that the most meaningful direction for personal application comes individually through inspiration or revelation from the Lord through the Holy Ghost. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “Teachers who are commanded to teach ‘the principles of [the] gospel’ and ‘the doctrine of the kingdom’ (D&C 88:77) should generally forgo teaching specific rules or applications. . . . Once a teacher has taught the doctrine and the associated principles from the scriptures and the living prophets, such specific applications or rules are generally the responsibility of individuals and families” (“Gospel Teaching,” 79).

Explain, Share, and Testify of Gospel Doctrines and Principles [2.6]

Explaining doctrines and principles, sharing insights and relevant experiences, and testifying of divine truth clarifies a person’s understanding of gospel doctrines and principles and improves their ability to teach the gospel to others. As students explain, share, and testify, they are often led by the Holy Ghost to a deeper testimony of the very things they are expressing. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, their words and expressions can also have a significant impact on the hearts and minds of their peers or others who are listening.

Teachers who thoughtfully and prayerfully study, prepare, and teach a lesson tend to learn a great deal. This same principle holds true for students. As they study and teach each other the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel, they will obtain greater understanding and strengthen their testimonies.



Testify [2.6.3]

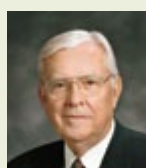
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When students have explained gospel principles and shared their experiences in applying them in their lives, they are often better prepared to testify of what they have come to believe.

Elder Boyd K. Packer explained one of the blessings of bearing testimony: "Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be found in the bearing of it! . . .


"It is one thing to receive a witness from what you have read or what another has said; and that is a necessary beginning. It is quite another to have the Spirit confirm to you in your bosom that what you have testified is true" ("The Candle of the Lord," 54–55).

The sharing of testimony not only blesses the person who bears testimony but can also strengthen the faith and testimonies of others. Testifying gives opportunity for the Holy Ghost to bear witness of specific doctrines and principles of the restored gospel. A testimony does not always begin with the phrase "I'd like to bear my testimony." It can simply be a statement of what a person knows to be true, spoken with sincerity and conviction. It can be a simple affirmation of how a person feels about a doctrine or principle of the gospel and the difference it has made in his or her life. Students can understand more clearly how gospel principles can be applied and feel more inspired to apply them in their lives when they hear the teacher and other students bear testimony of the value of those principles.



"Testimony—real testimony, born of the Spirit and confirmed by the Holy Ghost—changes lives."
(M. Russell Ballard, "Pure Testimony," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 40)

Teachers can encourage students to testify of gospel truths by asking questions that invite them to share their experiences and beliefs (see section 5.1.3, "Questions That Invite Feelings and Testimony" on page 61). They can also provide other opportunities for students to testify to their peers. Teachers should be sensitive to the personal and sacred nature of testimony and can invite but should never require students to share their testimonies. Teachers should take the opportunity to testify often of their own love for Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the truth and value of gospel doctrines and principles. Teachers should be aware of, and refer to, testimonies expressed by the Savior as well as those borne by latter-day prophets and apostles.



"Faith promoting incidents occur in teaching when students take a role in teaching and testifying to their peers."
(Robert D. Hales, "Teaching by Faith," 4)

Memorization can be a wonderful tool to help students know and love selected passages of scripture. As Elder Richard G. Scott explained, “When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased” (“He Lives,” Ensign, Nov. 1999, 88). Care should be taken, however, to tailor expectations to each student’s capabilities and circumstances. Students should not be made to feel embarrassed or overwhelmed if they are unable to memorize.

Teachers will be better able to help their students if they master these passages themselves. When teachers refer to scripture mastery passages with consistency, maintain appropriate expectations, and use methods that appeal to different learning styles, they will be more successful in helping students to master these key passages. During lessons, scripture mastery passages should be used to clarify related doctrines and principles. They may be used as the theme for devotionals or displayed somewhere in the classroom. Students should also be encouraged to study and apply them outside of class.

In locations where multiple teachers serve together on a faculty, student learning will be enhanced when faculty members take a unified approach to scripture mastery. Periodically teachers may choose to review scripture mastery references from previous years so that students can maintain mastery of all of the selected passages.

While scripture mastery is an important part of the curriculum, it should supplement, not overshadow, daily sequential study of the scriptures. Teachers should be wise in the time they allot to scripture mastery. Home-study teachers must be particularly careful that the weekly class does not become a weekly scripture mastery activity. Teachers should choose methods, activities, and music that are in keeping with the dignity, purpose, and spirit of the scriptures and that avoid contention.

Basic Doctrines [2.7.2]

The Basic Doctrines have been identified to be highlighted in both seminary and institute classes. Teachers are to help students identify, understand, believe, explain, and apply these doctrines of the gospel. Doing so will help students strengthen their testimonies and increase their appreciation for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. A study of these doctrines will also help them be better prepared to teach these important truths to others.

It is important to remember that other significant doctrines of the gospel will also be taught, even though they are not listed in the Basic Doctrines.



“Great power can come from memorizing scriptures. To memorize a scripture is to forge a new friendship. It is like discovering a new individual who can help in time of need, give inspiration and comfort, and be a source of motivation for needed change.”

(Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” 6)



Elder David A. Bednar taught that reading a book of scripture “from beginning to end initiates the flow of living water into our lives by introducing us to important stories, gospel doctrines, and timeless principles. This approach also enables us to learn about major characters in the scriptures and the sequence, timing, and context of events and teachings. Reading the written word in this way exposes us to the breadth of a volume of scripture. This is the first and most fundamental way of obtaining living water” (“A Reservoir of Living Water” [CES fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007], 2).

Notes

Incorporating Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning [3.1]

Each scripture-based lesson in seminary or institute focuses on a scripture block rather than on a particular concept, doctrine, or principle. The curriculum divides the scriptures into these scripture blocks, which may be as little as one chapter (or section), or as broad as an entire book of scripture. Most scripture blocks contain natural breaks where a change in action or topic occurs. Based on these changes, the scripture block is divided into smaller segments or groups of verses. Organizing the study of the entire scripture block into these smaller segments provides a framework for understanding and teaching the message of the inspired author.

As teachers and students study these segments of the scripture block sequentially, they incorporate many of the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning. Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning, such as understanding the context and content, identifying, understanding, and feeling the truth and importance of and applying gospel doctrines and principles, are not methods but are outcomes to be achieved. These fundamentals work in harmony with each other and establish a basic pattern that teachers and students can follow to instill the gospel within their minds and hearts. This pattern is described as follows:

1. Understand the Context and Content. Helping students understand the context and content of a scripture block is the foundational step in the process of teaching the scriptures. An understanding of such information as background and story line creates a basis for discovering gospel principles and doctrines as well as providing illustration and clarification of those truths found within the scripture block. The clarity and the depth of understanding provided by this foundation is often diminished or lost when only a verse or two of a scripture block is taught.
2. Identify Doctrines and Principles. An understanding of the content of the scriptures prepares students and teachers to identify principles and doctrines found within the scripture block. Sometimes a scriptural author will directly state the principle or doctrine they wish to convey. Other times those truths are simply implied as they are portrayed within the scriptural account, creating a need to express the gospel teaching in a simple statement of truth.



In other instances, the context and content will be studied and understood sufficiently for a principle or doctrine to be identified before moving to the next segment of the scripture block. As teachers or students briefly mention a doctrine or principle when it becomes evident in the text, it provides opportunities for the Holy Ghost to teach and personalize gospel truths needed by individual students, even though these truths may not be discussed at length as part of the lesson.

For yet other segments, teachers and students may study only the context and content, or teachers may merely summarize the story line or content before moving on to the next group of verses. Summarizing means to briefly tell what is contained in chapters or verses that are not emphasized in class. Summarizing allows a teacher to move quickly through portions of the scripture block. By summarizing segments of the scripture block rather than omitting them, teachers help students keep the story line and context clear in their minds and provide a foundation for discovering and understanding principles or doctrines that will arise later in the block. Summarizing also helps preserve the integrity and flow of the inspired author's message.

As teachers and students progress sequentially through each segment of the scripture block in this manner, they can better understand how one group of verses relates to the others. Seeing the relationship among the various parts of the scripture block helps teachers and students not only understand the individual doctrines and principles on a deeper level, but also helps them perceive the broader view of what the scriptures are teaching.

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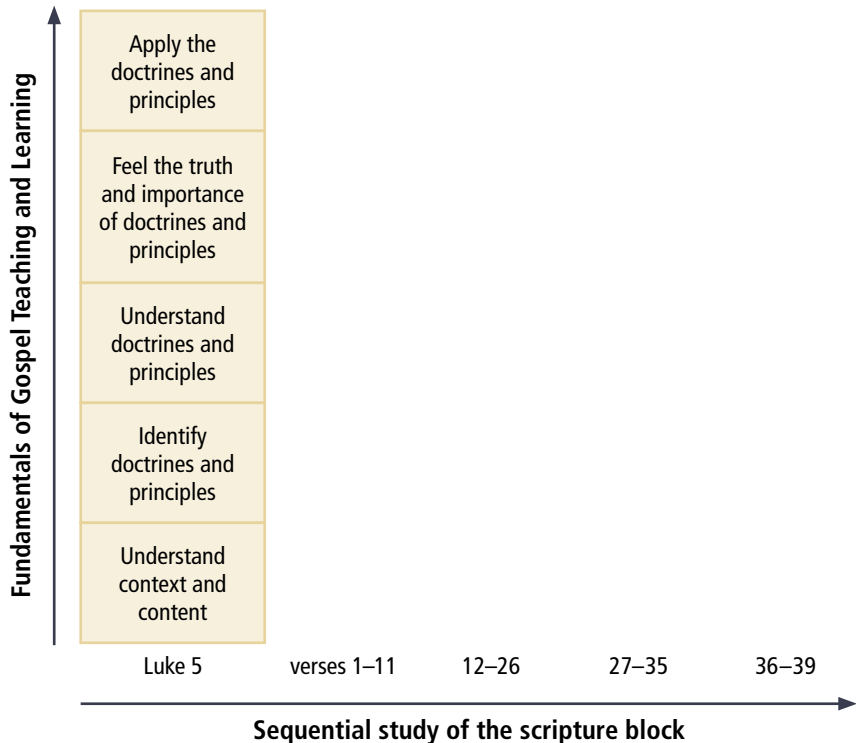
Luke 5: An Example [3.2]

The following example demonstrates how a teacher might teach a scripture block incorporating the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning.

The scripture block in this example, Luke 5, could be divided into smaller groups of verses or segments based on changes in the story line or topic:

- Luke 5:1–11 After miraculously catching a multitude of fishes, Peter, James, and John are called by the Lord to be fishers of men.
- Luke 5:12–26 Jesus heals several individuals with physical infirmities and forgives sins.
- Luke 5:27–35 Jesus eats with publicans and sinners, causing the scribes and Pharisees to question Him.
- Luke 5:36–39 Jesus gives the parable of new wine in old bottles.

The following chart will be used to illustrate the progression of this sample lesson through each of these segments. It will also depict the extent to which the teacher plans to incorporate the Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning in each group of verses.



Preparing to Teach

Personal Preparation [4.1]

Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “Power comes when a teacher has done all that he can to prepare, not just the individual lesson, but in keeping his life in tune with the Spirit. If he will learn to rely on the Spirit for inspiration, he can go before his class . . . secure in the knowledge that he can teach with inspiration” (Teach Ye Diligently, rev. ed. [1991], 358–59).

The most important and fundamental part of a gospel teacher’s preparation is to prepare himself or herself spiritually. Some important considerations in such preparation are living the gospel, praying for help and guidance, exercising faith, and participating in inservice training.

Live the Gospel [4.1.1]

How faithfully teachers live the gospel influences every aspect of their teaching. No greater preparation can occur than that of living a life worthy of the guiding, enabling companionship of the Holy Ghost (see section 1.2, “Live” on page 2).

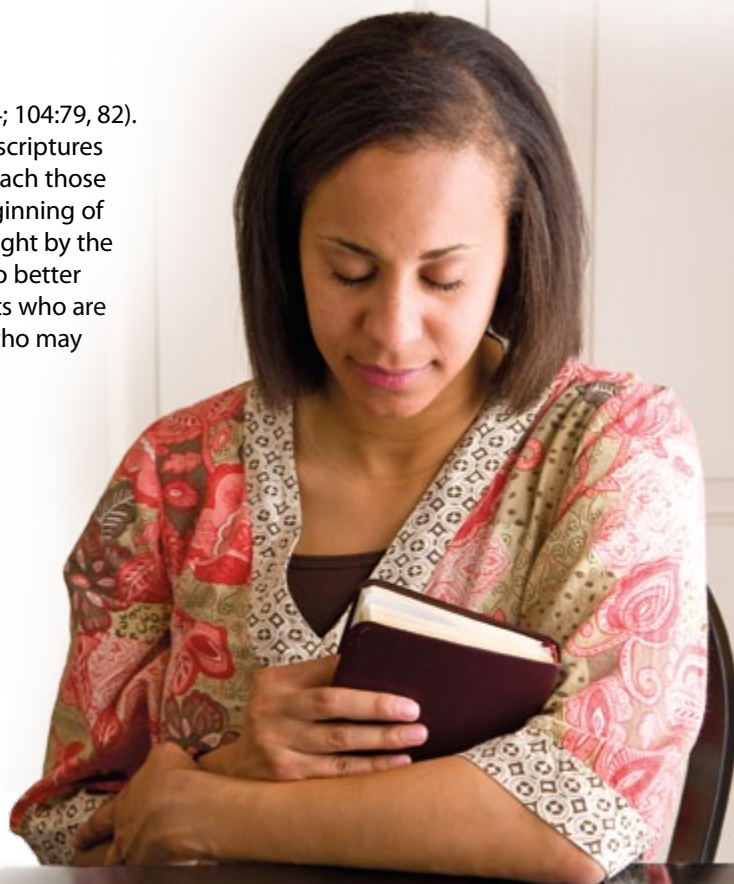
Pray for Help and Guidance [4.1.2]

Prayer is an integral part of preparing to teach (see D&C 42:14; 104:79, 82). A teacher can pray for the Spirit’s help in understanding the scriptures and gospel principles, for wisdom in deciding how to best teach those principles by the Spirit, for help and guidance before the beginning of each class, and for the students’ willingness to feel and be taught by the Spirit. Teachers can ask the Lord for the gift of discernment to better understand each student, for help to reach individual students who are struggling, and for the gift of charity to love those students who may be more difficult to love (see Moroni 7:48).

Exercise Faith [4.1.3]

The “teach” paragraph in the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes implies that an effective teacher should have confidence in the power of the word of God, faith in the Lord and the Holy Ghost, and trust in the students. When teachers are not successful, it is often because one of these elements is lacking.

Confidence in the power of the word. Teachers may be tempted to believe that students will not like studying the scriptures, or that they cannot teach the scriptures day after day and maintain the students’ interest. Teachers should remember, however, that the scriptures contain



A teacher seeking to fulfill the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes by exercising faith in the power of the word, in the Lord and the Holy Ghost, and in the students should consistently ask:

Does my teaching:

1. Promote a deepened understanding of and love for the word of God?
2. Invite the Holy Ghost and lead to edification?
3. Encourage each student to personally learn and live the gospel in faith?
4. Help my students to better know, love, and follow Jesus Christ?

Participate in Inservice Training [4.1.4]

Seminaries and institutes provides inservice training opportunities for all of its teachers and leaders. Inservice training is primarily intended to improve teaching, increase gospel knowledge, and help teachers learn how to administer in seminaries and institutes.

One facet of this training is formal inservice meetings. Inservice training meetings are held on a regular basis, and teachers and leaders are expected to attend. During these meetings, participants study and discuss the scriptures to deepen their understanding. They learn and practice inspiring methods of teaching. They also share ideas for increasing student enrollment, attendance, and completion; counsel together about current needs; and learn how to fulfill administrative responsibilities.

Another facet of inservice training involves classroom visits and observations. Teachers can benefit greatly from inviting a coordinator, principal, or fellow teacher to observe their teaching and give helpful feedback. Often an observer can be asked to give specific feedback on a particular teaching skill a teacher is striving to develop. Where opportunity exists, a teacher may also benefit from observing other teachers.

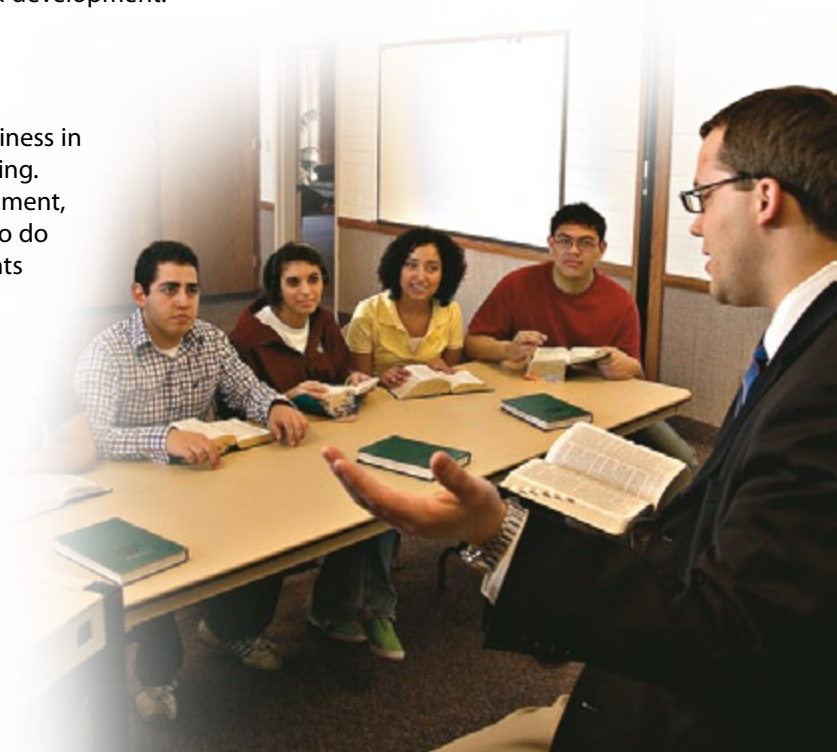
Those who approach inservice training in faith and with a sincere desire to learn and improve will experience steady growth and development.

Student Preparation [4.2]

The scriptures speak of a state of preparation or readiness in the hearts and minds of those seeking spiritual learning. For example, Ezra, a priest and scribe in the Old Testament, “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it” (Ezra 7:10). The book of Acts describes faithful Saints who “received the word with all readiness of mind” (Acts 17:11). During His visit to the people of Nephi, the Savior encouraged them: “Prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again” (3 Nephi 17:3).

In order for students to feel the edifying influence of the Holy Ghost in their learning experience, they too should be “in a preparation to hear the word” (Alma 32:6). In the classroom, students are ready to learn when their minds are alert, when

Notes



5

Teaching Methods, Skills, and Approaches

Teaching is a complex and multifaceted task. A list of methods or techniques for teaching would include many ideas and examples, and a full discussion of them would fill volumes. It is possible, however, to cluster them into some general areas of teaching methods, skills, or approaches that are essential to effective teaching. This section will address some of these important areas.

When deciding which methods to use in teaching, it is important to remember that methods and skills are only means to an end, not an end in and of themselves. Teachers should select methods that will best help students understand the content, doctrines, and principles of a particular scripture block and that will facilitate edification and application. Keeping in mind the purpose for using a specific skill or technique will help teachers implement it in a more meaningful way. It is also important to remember that without the Spirit, even the most effective teaching methods and approaches will not succeed.

Questions [5.1]

Asking effective questions is one of the most important skills a teacher can develop. Questions can engage students in the process of understanding the scriptures and help them identify and understand important gospel truths. Questions also help students reflect upon how the gospel has influenced their lives and to consider how they may apply gospel principles now and in the future. Asking effective questions can encourage students to invite the Holy Ghost into their learning experience through exercising their agency and fulfilling their role in the learning process.

It is worth great effort to carefully craft questions during lesson preparation that will lead to understanding and engage the minds and hearts of the students as they learn. When planning questions, a teacher should first determine the purpose for which they are asking a particular question (for example, a teacher may desire to have students discover information within a scriptural passage, to think about the meaning of a passage, or to share testimony of the truthfulness of a principle). The teacher should then thoughtfully design the question with that purpose in mind.

A few carefully chosen words can make a great difference in whether or not a question results in the desired outcome.

Teachers should strive to prepare and ask questions that stimulate thinking and feeling. They should generally avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” or where the answer is so obvious that the students are not motivated to think about it. Teachers should also avoid questions that could spark controversy as this may frustrate the students and create contention in the class, which grieves the Spirit (see 3 Nephi 11:29).

“To ask and to answer questions is at the heart of all learning and all teaching.”

(Henry B. Eyring, “The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest” [an evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 6, 1998], 5–6)



When asking questions in class, it is important for teachers to give students time to think about their response. Sometimes teachers ask a question, pause for a second or two, and then when no one immediately responds, panic and give the answer themselves. Effective questions, however, often require thought and reflection, and students may need time to find the answer in the scriptures or to formulate a meaningful answer. On occasion it can be helpful to give students time to write down their answer before responding.

Jesus Christ, the Master Teacher, used different types of questions to encourage others to ponder and apply the principles He taught. His questions varied depending on what He was seeking to bring about in the lives of those He was teaching. Some questions encouraged His listeners to think and to refer to the scriptures for answers, such as when He asked, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). Other questions were intended to invite commitment, as when He asked, "What manner of men ought ye to be?" (3 Nephi 27:27).

While there is a wide variety of questions a teacher may ask, there are four general types of questions that are particularly important in gospel teaching and learning:

1. Questions that invite students to search for information
2. Questions that lead students to analyze for understanding
3. Questions that invite feelings and testimony
4. Questions that encourage application

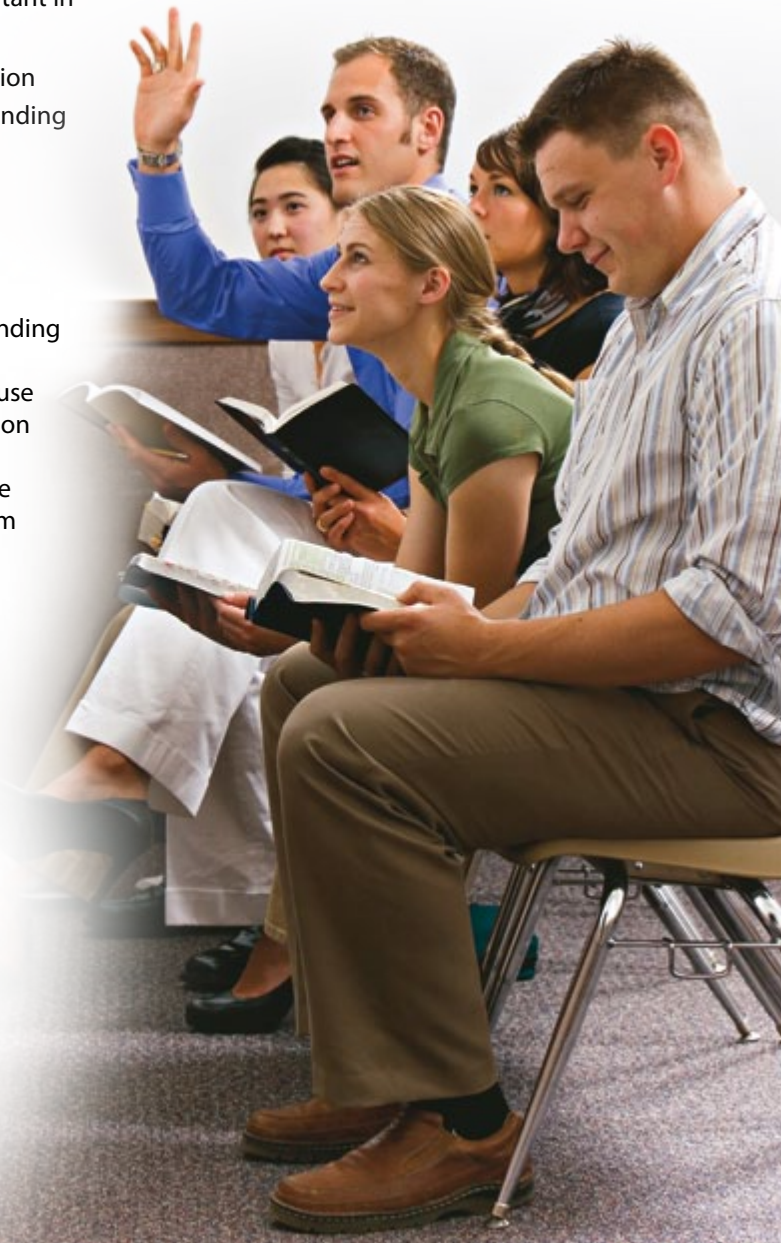
Questions That Invite Students to Search for Information [5.1.1]

Search questions help students build their basic understanding of the scriptures by inviting them to search for important details relating to the content of the scripture block. Because search questions encourage students to look for information within the text of the scriptures, it is helpful to ask such questions before reading the verses where the answers are found. This focuses the students' attention and allows them to discover the answers within the scriptural account.

Search questions often include words such as who, what, when, how, where, and why. Some examples of questions that invite students to search for information include:

- According to Matthew 19:22, why did the rich young man leave feeling sorrowful?
- In 1 Samuel 17:24, how did the men of Israel respond when they saw Goliath? How did David respond in verse 26?
- What counsel did Alma give his son Shiblon in Alma chapter 38, verses 5–15?

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- What doctrines concerning the nature of God can we learn from the First Vision? (see JS—H 1:15–20).
- What lesson can we learn from the effort made by the woman with the issue of blood to reach the Savior, and His response to her as a result? (see Mark 5:24–34).

Helping students develop a deeper understanding of principles and doctrines. In addition to identifying principles and doctrines, students need to understand them before they can be meaningfully applied. Questions that lead to a clearer understanding of the meaning of a particular principle or doctrine, that encourage students to think about a principle in a modern context, or that invite students to explain their understanding of a principle are particularly helpful. The following are some examples:

- What would be evidence that we loved God with all our “might, mind and strength?” (Moroni 10:32).
- Why would praying always help you gain the spiritual strength necessary to overcome such temptations as speaking unkindly to others or participating in entertainment that is offensive to the Spirit? (see D&C 10:5).
- What behaviors and characteristics would you see in the life of someone who was building on the foundation of Christ? (see Helaman 5:1–14).
- Using what we have learned in Alma 40, how would you explain the doctrine of resurrection to a friend who is not of our faith?

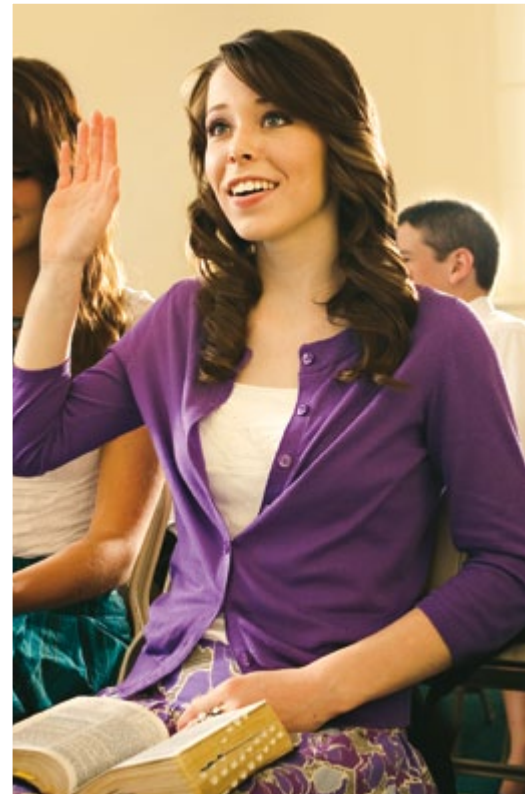
Questions That *Invite Feelings and Testimony* [5.1.3]

Some questions help students think about and understand gospel principles and doctrines, while others can cause them to reflect on spiritual experiences and lead students to feel more deeply the truthfulness and significance of a gospel principle or doctrine in their lives. Many times, those feelings engender a stronger desire in the hearts of students to live a gospel principle more faithfully. In an address to CES religious educators, Elder Henry B. Eyring referred to these kinds of questions when he said:

“Some questions invite inspiration. Great teachers ask those. . . . Here is a question that might not invite inspiration: ‘How is a true prophet recognized?’ That question invites an answer which is a list, drawn from memory of the scriptures and the words of living prophets. Many students could participate in answering. Most could give at least a passable suggestion. And minds would be stimulated.

“But we could also ask the question this way, with just a small difference: ‘When have you felt that you were in the presence of a prophet?’ That will invite individuals to search their memories for feelings. After asking, we might wisely wait for a moment before calling on someone to respond. Even those who do not speak will be thinking of spiritual experiences. That will invite the Holy Ghost” (“The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest,” 6).

Notes



Notes

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

Rephrase the question. At times students may struggle to respond to a question because the question is not clear. The teacher may need to rephrase the question or ask the students if they understand what was asked. Teachers should avoid asking a series of questions in succession without allowing students adequate time to think deeply enough to formulate appropriate responses.

Listen carefully and ask follow-up questions. Teachers are sometimes so concerned about what to say or do next that they do not pay attention to what students are saying. By observing and listening carefully to students, teachers can discern their needs and guide the discussion under the direction of the Holy Ghost. Teachers can make sure they understand the students' answers by asking questions like "Can you help me understand what you mean by that?" or "Can you give me an example of what you mean?" Asking such follow-up questions will often invite a student to share more of what they are thinking and feeling and frequently invites a spirit of testimony in the response. Teachers should remind students to listen to each other as well and not to talk when someone else is speaking.

"Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all."

(Doctrine and Covenants 88:122)



Redirect student's comments or questions. Many times class discussions follow a pattern where a teacher asks a question, a student responds, and then the teacher adds his or her insight to the student's answer before asking the next question. Discussions can become much more meaningful, lively, and effective when a teacher redirects an answer or comment from one student to other students. Simple questions like "What would you add to that?" or "What are your thoughts on that comment?" can create a pattern where students respond to students. This often greatly enhances the learning experience. Usually, unless time is limited, all students who desire to make a comment should have an opportunity to speak.

Acknowledge the response in a positive manner. When a student gives a response, the teacher needs to acknowledge it in some way. This can be a simple "thank you" or a comment about the answer. When an incorrect response is given, the teacher needs to be careful not to embarrass the student. An effective teacher can build on a part of the student's comment that is correct or ask a follow-up question that allows a student to rethink his or her response.

Read the Scriptures Together in Class [5.3]

Reading the scriptures in class can help students become familiar with and better understand the verses they are studying. It can also help them become more confident in their ability to read the scriptures on their own. Teachers need to be careful not to embarrass those who do not read well or who are very shy. Students who prefer not to read aloud should not be forced to do so, but teachers can encourage them to participate in ways that they are more comfortable with. For example, assigning a short scriptural passage to a student beforehand so he or she can practice reading it may be an appropriate way for that student to participate in class.

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

6

Continuing to Improve as a Teacher

As teachers strive to implement the principles and methods described in this handbook, they should constantly but patiently work to improve. Teachers must learn principles of effective teaching and master effective teaching skills line upon line through study, faith, practice, and experience. There are many ways to evaluate teaching effectiveness and to receive feedback and assistance as to how to improve. Some things that will help teachers improve are formal, structured methods such as observation and feedback from peers, supervisors, or students. There are also informal ways such as listening to students, watching other teachers, or sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues.

One of the most valuable sources of feedback can be self-assessment under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught:

“After a class, you might find a moment to pray that you might see clearly what happened in the class and what happened in the lives of the students. You may do it your own way, but the way I like to do it is something like this: I ask, ‘Was there something I said or did, or that they said or did, that lifted them?’ . . .

“If you ask in prayer, humbly and in faith, you will sometimes—perhaps often—have moments during that class brought back to your memory of a look on a student’s face, or the sound in a student’s voice, or even the way the student sat up and leaned forward at some point in the lesson that will give you reassurance that they were lifted.

“But more important than that, it can give you the chance to learn. You can learn what happened in the classroom and, therefore, what you can do to bring those lifting experiences to your students again and again” (“Converting Principles” [remarks at an evening with Elder L. Tom Perry, Feb. 2, 1996], 2).

As teachers desire to improve and consistently work to teach in a way that is pleasing to Father in Heaven, He will inspire them in their preparation, strengthen their relationships with students, magnify their efforts in the classroom, and bless them with His Spirit to more fully accomplish His work. He will also help them see areas where they can progress as they strive to teach in a way that leads students to understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, the goal of every religious educator should be to represent as well as possible the Savior of the world as “a teacher come from God” (John 3:2). Speaking to a group of seminary and institute faculty, Elder Boyd K. Packer said: “The attributes which it has been my choice privilege to recognize in you brethren and sisters over [the] years are no more nor less than the image of the Master Teacher showing through. I believe that to the degree you perform, according to the challenge and charge which you have, the image of Christ



does become engraved upon your countenances. And for all practical purposes, in that classroom at that time and in that expression and with that inspiration, you are He and He is you" ("The Ideal Teacher" [address to seminary and institute faculty, June 28, 1962], 5–6).

The Lord's Promise [6.1]

Teaching the gospel is the Lord's work, and He wants seminary and institute teachers to succeed in that task. When teachers and leaders call on Him daily, they will feel that help come. He gives a promise to those who are striving to live and teach His gospel:

"Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;

"For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.

"But a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall declare whatsoever thing ye declare in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things.

"And I give unto you this promise, that inasmuch as ye do this the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever ye shall say" (D&C 100:5–8).



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