



PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN LUKE

# SPEAKING IN SACRAMENT MEETING?

By John Hilton III and Mindy Raye Friedman

You've been asked to speak in sacrament meeting. What do you do? First off, relax. Remember, the congregation is on your side, and everyone wants you to give a fabulous talk.

One of the purposes of sacrament meeting is to "provide gospel instruction" and to "strengthen faith and testimony" (*Administering the Church* [2010], 138). As a youth speaker, the Lord and your ward leaders have trusted you with part of this responsibility. You have the opportunity to teach and to inspire the members of your ward or branch. So, how can you write a meaningful talk? Here are some tips and ideas to consider as you prepare, organize, and deliver your talk.

## TIPS FOR PREPARATION

- Start thinking about your topic as soon as you are assigned to speak.
- Pray for the Spirit to guide you as you determine what to say.
- Think about your own experiences with the topic and how you might share them.
- Read about the topic in the scriptures. Mark or write down things you feel inspired to use.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT YOUTH TALKS

**Q. What is the purpose of a sacrament meeting talk?**

**A.** To provide gospel instruction and strengthen faith and testimony.

**Q. What should a sacrament meeting talk focus on?**

**A.** Talks should focus on gospel subjects that help members build faith and testimony.

**Q. Why does my bishop or branch president always have youth speakers?**

**A.** Ward leaders are actually instructed by Church headquarters to regularly invite youth ages 12 to 18 to speak briefly in sacrament meeting on assigned gospel subjects.

**Q. Can someone else write my talk for me?**

**A.** You should prepare your own talk, though the bishopric may encourage your parents to help.

**Q. What should I put in my talk?**

**A.** Teach the doctrines of the gospel, relate faith-promoting experiences, bear witness of divinely revealed truths, and use the scriptures (see D&C 42:12; 52:9). Teach in a spirit of love after prayerful preparation.

**Q. Is there anything I should avoid in my talk?**

**A.** You should not speak on subjects that are speculative, controversial, or out of harmony with Church doctrine.

**Q. What else do I need to remember?**

**A.** To maintain an atmosphere of reverent worship in sacrament meetings, when speakers use scriptures as part of their talks, they should not ask the congregation to open their own books to the scriptural references.

Answers taken from *Administering the Church* (2010), 138–40.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

As you prepare your talk, remember the stories you have studied in the scriptures, and also consider studying the topic in these gospel references:

- **Bible Dictionary:** In the back of your Bible and online you can find definitions and scriptures by looking for your topic in the Bible Dictionary.
- **Topical Guide:** Also in the back of your Bible and online, the Topical Guide can help you look up scriptures on your topic.
- **General conference:** Talks given by Church leaders during general conference are a great resource for studying your topic. You can find conference reports in the May and November *Ensign* magazine issues or online at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org). You can also find conference roundups with good quotes for youth in the May and November issues of the *New Era*.
- **True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference:** This booklet provides definitions and additional information on many gospel topics.
- **For the Strength of Youth:** Many of the topics you may be asked to speak on can be found in this booklet.
- **LDS.org:** On the Church's official website, [LDS.org](http://LDS.org), you can search for articles, talks, and other material for your topic. Just type your topic into the search bar near the top-right corner of the website.
- **Youth.lds.org:** At [youth.lds.org](http://youth.lds.org), designed specifically for youth, you can explore more about the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, find quotes and talks by Church leaders, and search for articles on your topic.

### 1. Prepare and Teach by the Spirit

Doctrine and Covenants 42:14 tells us how to obtain the Spirit's influence in our teaching: "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith." Start your talk preparations with sincere prayer. The Holy Ghost can "show unto you all things what ye should do" in preparing and giving your talk (2 Nephi 32:5). Ask God to enlighten your mind so you can understand what you are to speak about and how best to present the information.

An important part of this preparation is to start writing your talk as soon as you receive the assignment to give it. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, "May I encourage you to start thinking about and planning early for any [talk] that you are to give" ("Teaching and Learning in the Church" [worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 10, 2007], *Ensign*, June 2007, 90). Preparing early will give you more time to receive insights and inspiration.



### 2. Organize ✓✓✓✓✓

As you prayerfully consider what to say in your talk, consider these four main elements, which can be organized in any order:

1. Share a doctrine or principle related to your topic.
2. Use scriptures to teach about the doctrine (see D&C 42:12; 52:9), and relate how they are important to the congregation.
3. Tell faith-promoting experiences—especially ones from your own life.
4. Bear your testimony of the topic and anything else you feel prompted to testify about.



### 3. Speak from the Heart

It is often better to prepare a simple outline of what you are to speak on instead of writing the talk out word for word and reading it. Reading a talk may tie you down to say exactly what is written instead of being able to adapt as the Holy Ghost gives you “in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:6).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught, “We must . . . speak out of [our] hearts rather than out of [our] books” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 619–20). By making your own experiences and testimony a vital part of your talk, you will be more likely to speak from your heart and affect those who hear your talk.

Remember, your ward leaders asked you to speak on the topic, so don’t just rely on the thoughts and stories of others. As you follow the Spirit in preparing and giving the talk, He will help you know what to say as you speak to your ward or branch members. **NE**

#### TIPS FOR DELIVERY

- Practice giving your talk in front of a mirror or a family member beforehand.
- Don’t start by telling everyone how unqualified you are or that you don’t want to be speaking.
- Make sure you speak slowly, clearly, and loudly enough for everyone to hear.
- Stand up straight as you speak.
- Try not to move your hands too much. For young women, if you tend to fidget with your hair or jewelry, consider wearing your hair back and leaving your jewelry at home.
- Don’t just read your talk with your head down. Look up as much as possible, and try to make eye contact with people in the congregation.
- If you get nervous, just pause and take a deep breath. Then move on with your talk.

