



By Tad R.
Callister

Sunday School
General President

As we become more committed learners, we will experience the divine joy that comes from learning and living the gospel of Jesus Christ.



THE Joy OF Learning

The story is told of a man who became known as the town idler. He was unwilling to work, unwilling to seek employment. He simply lived off the efforts of others. Finally the townspeople had had enough. They decided to take him to the outskirts of town and banish him. As one of the townspeople escorted him in a wagon to the edge of town, the driver felt a wave of compassion sweep over him. Perhaps the derelict should be given one more chance. Accordingly, he asked, “Would you like a bushel of corn to get a new start?”

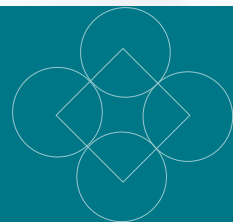
The derelict responded, “Is it husked?”¹

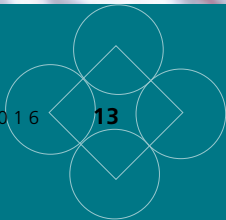
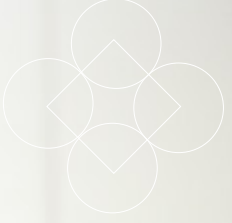
Teachers and Learners: Equal Responsibility to Contribute

Sometimes we find people on the scriptural dole—they want the scriptures husked before they partake. They want the gospel in a series of entertaining sound bites or video clips. They want the Sunday School teacher to prepare and spoon-feed them the lesson with little preparation or participation on their part.

In contrast, the Savior once invited His learners to go home because they could not understand His words. He commanded them to pray, ponder, and “prepare [their] minds for the morrow,” when He would “come unto [them] again” (see 3 Nephi 17:2–3).

The lesson was this: It is the responsibility not only of the teacher to come prepared but also of the learner. Just as the teacher has the responsibility to teach by the Spirit, so too the learner has the responsibility to learn by the Spirit (see D&C 50:13–21).





The Book of Mormon records: “The preacher was no better than the hearer, *neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal*” (Alma 1:26; emphasis added).

Following are some suggestions for what we can do to experience the joy that comes when we do our part in learning and living the gospel.

Learning at Home **Study the Scriptures**

Every member is responsible for his or her own gospel learning; we cannot delegate that responsibility. Most of that learning comes through regular scripture study. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) declared: “If we are not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner.”² The Apostle Paul observed that the Jews in Berea “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,” and then he shared the reason for such receptivity: “[They] *searched the scriptures daily*” (Acts 17:11; emphasis added).

Daily scripture study is an essential ingredient to our spirituality. Nothing else can fully compensate for its absence in our daily routine. For this reason, scripture study should be set-aside time, not leftover time.



Some may say, “But I don’t have time for daily scripture study amid all my other duties in life.” This statement is somewhat reminiscent of the story of two axmen who held a contest to determine who could cut down more trees in a day. At sunrise the contest commenced. Every hour the smaller man wandered off into the forest for 10 minutes or so. Each time he did this, his opponent smiled and nodded, assured that he was forging ahead. The larger man never left his post, never stopped cutting, never took a break.

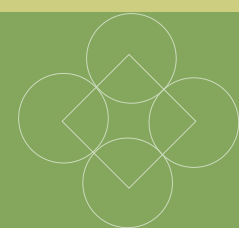
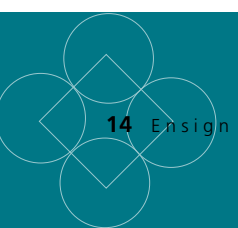
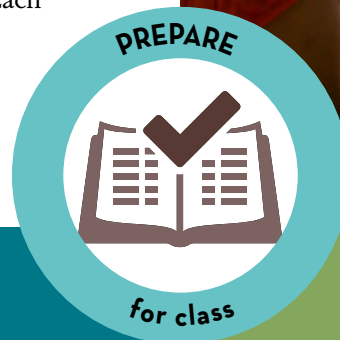
When the day ended, the larger man was shocked to learn that his opponent, who seemingly wasted so much time, had cut many more trees than he. “How did you do it when you took so many breaks?” he asked.

The winner replied, “Oh, I was sharpening my ax.”

Every time we study the scriptures, we are sharpening our spiritual ax. And the miraculous part is that when we do so, we are able to use the remainder of our time more wisely.

Prepare in Advance

Studies have shown that only a minority of Church members read in advance the scriptures to be discussed in Sunday classes. Each of us can help reverse this





condition. We can carry our share of the learning experience by coming to class better prepared, having read the scriptures and ready to share insights. Our preparation can be a spiritual gift we give to all class members.

Learning in Class

Participate in Class

The command to open our mouths (see D&C 60:2–3) applies not only in a missionary setting but also in a classroom setting. When we participate, we invite the Spirit, who can then bear witness of the truth of our comments and enlighten our minds with further insights. In addition, our participation may inspire the thoughts of another and thus encourage his or her input.

In this way, we are following a teaching principle taught by the Lord: “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*” (D&C 88:122; emphasis added). Sometimes participating in class is not easy; it requires us to step outside our comfort zone. But doing so brings increased growth to all in the class.

Record Impressions

For some time I have carried blank note cards to church and sought for doctrinal insights or spiritual impressions I might record. I can honestly say I have been richly rewarded. This approach has changed my perspective; it has focused and accelerated my learning; it has increased my anticipation for church.

Why is it so important to record spiritual experiences we receive at church and elsewhere? Suppose for a moment that a mother is speaking to her teenage son and at one point he says, “Mom, this is really good counsel.” He then takes out a notebook and starts to record impressions he received from their conversation. Once the mother has recovered from the shock, would she not want to give him more?

No doubt the same principle applies to counsel from our Father in Heaven. As we record the impressions He gives to us, He is more likely to give us further revelation. In addition, many of the impressions we receive may seem at first like small acorns of thought, but if we nurture and ponder them, they may grow into spiritual oak trees.

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of the importance of recording insights and impressions: “If you . . . proceed to discuss important questions . . . and fail to note them down, . . . perhaps, for neglecting to write these things when God had revealed them, not esteeming them of sufficient worth, the Spirit may withdraw . . . and there is, or was, a vast knowledge, of infinite importance, which is now lost.”³



The Joy of Learning

Learning is much more than a divine duty. It is also meant to be an exquisite joy.

On one occasion, an ancient mathematician named Archimedes was asked by his king to determine if the king's new crown was solid gold or if the goldsmith had dishonestly substituted some silver for gold. Archimedes pondered the solution; finally an answer came. So overjoyed was he by this discovery that, according to legend, he ran about the city crying, "Eureka! Eureka!"—meaning, "I have found it! I have found it!"

As great as was his joy in discovering a scientific principle, there is a far greater joy in discovering the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ: those truths that not only inform us but also save us. For this reason the Savior said, "These things have I spoken unto you, . . . that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). And for this reason "the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) when they learned the plan of salvation. Just as seeds have the inherent power to grow, so gospel truths have the inherent power to bring joy.



It is not only a divine command to "seek learning" (D&C 88:118), but it is also a godlike pursuit. Every time we study the scriptures, come to class a little better prepared, participate in class discussions, ask questions, and record sacred impressions, we are becoming more like God, thus increasing our capacity to experience the joy He feels.

May we all strive to become more committed learners, more divine learners—at home, in class, and wherever we are. As we do so, we will experience the supernal joy that comes from learning and living the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. A similar story was told by Elder D. Todd Christofferson in the October 2014 general conference.
2. Harold B. Lee, regional representatives' seminar, Dec. 12, 1970.
3. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 2:199.

A Godlike Pursuit



to Seek Learning



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