



**By Elder
M. Russell Ballard**

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

In my office I have a little plaque that reads, “Above all else, brethren, let us think straight.” These were the last words in mortality spoken by my grandfather Melvin J. Ballard.



If understood and properly practiced, the principle of learning to think straight can help you be successful in your journey through mortality. I recognize that all of you are thinking. My charge to you is to develop the skill and the capability of thinking straight.

How do we learn to think straight? The book of Proverbs has a little guide that might be helpful: “Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise” (Proverbs 19:20). I would suggest that straight thinking probably begins with straight listening, with **careful listening**, with accurate listening. As you receive counsel and instruction, **extract principles** that will be eternally important in your lives and then **make them part of your lives**.

It is important to **act slowly**. **Know the facts**. Fact finding sometimes requires **patience, time, and very careful consideration**. We can learn to be careful, fact-oriented thinkers, or we can become sloppy, inconclusive thinkers.

To be good at anything at all requires a lot of **practice** and skill in making decisions. The more one is exposed to the necessity of making decisions, the better one’s decision-making process becomes.

In all of this, the Lord has given us some very wonderful counsel: the problems of life, whether they be in business, government, social life, or

church activity, can best be solved by following this little formula:

“Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But, behold, I say unto you, that you must **study it out in your mind**; then you must **ask me if it be right**, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (D&C 9:7–8).

We have much for which we look to you, the youth of the Church. You just can’t imagine the conversations that go on at the Church headquarters about you. We worry about you; we pray for you. Not that we don’t trust you; that is not the case at all. We just want you to be ready. We want you to be prepared. We want you to be able to think straight in this very crooked-thinking world.

There are many things going on all about us at almost every level—international, national, local—that are going to require the **soundest and the most solid-thinking generation** that our Father in Heaven has ever raised. We believe **you can be that**. We want to do our part as your leaders. We want to sustain you and to help you. We want you to become the very best you.

Straight thinkers, my brothers and sisters, do not make serious mistakes in life. Make this principle part of you so you will be a great source of power for the building of the Church in the future.

Adapted from a BYU devotional address given on November 29, 1983.



Share Your Experiences

Share your experiences in applying this principle and read the experiences of other youth by going to **lds.org/go/73H**.