

“A Pattern in All Things that Ye May Not Be Deceived”: Prophetic Themes as an Anchor in Book of Mormon and Young Adult Religion Courses

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ABSTRACT: In a 2023 Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Annual Broadcast, Elder Clark G. Gilbert of the Seventy, Commissioner of the Church Educational System, emphasized five themes from the current prophetic messages that apply specifically to the young adults of the Church. This article will show how the prophetic themes shared by Elder Gilbert can be an anchor for faith in Jesus Christ and his prophets in young adult religion courses; can influence the curriculum for the course Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon; can influence teaching and ministering to students to strengthen testimonies of Jesus Christ, his living prophets, and the scriptures; and can also be applied to other religion courses to bless the lives of young adults in the Church. All gospel teachers can help students increase their faith in Jesus Christ by adding prophetic messages to their lessons.

KEYWORDS: PROPHETS · BOOK OF MORMON · TEACHING THE GOSPEL · TESTIMONY

In the 2023 Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Annual Broadcast, Elder Clark G. Gilbert of the Seventy, Commissioner of the Church Educational System, said,

We live in tumultuous times, but the Lord has declared, “I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations” (Doctrine and Covenants 52:14). But as Sister Wendy W. Nelson has taught, while Satan is abroad in the land, we also have a prophet in the land, who we can look to for truth and clarity in these latter days.

Tonight, I will highlight five prophetic themes that the prophet and the apostles have been emphasizing, particularly to the young adults of the Church. If I were leading a Teachings of the Living Prophets course next semester, these themes would anchor the syllabus. Regardless of the specific course you are teaching, I hope you will allow these messages to influence both your curriculum and the way you teach and minister to your students.

The five current prophetic emphases we would have you reflect on include:

1. Know your divine identity.
2. Draw on the power of Jesus Christ and your covenants.
3. Let God prevail, and follow His prophet.
4. Teach truth with love.
5. Take charge of your testimony.¹

Elder Gilbert specifically counseled religious educators that regardless of the course they are teaching, these prophetic messages should “influence your curriculum,” and “[influence] the way you teach and minister to students.” He also provided the metaphor of using prophetic messages as “an anchor” of a religion course syllabus.² This article will show how these prophetic themes shared by Elder Gilbert can be an anchor for faith in Jesus Christ and his prophets in young adult religion courses; can influence the curriculum for Brigham Young University and institute cornerstone religion course Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon, can influence teaching and ministering to students in Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon to strengthen testimonies of Jesus Christ, his living prophets, and the scriptures; and can also be applied to other religion courses to bless the lives of young adults in the Church. All gospel teachers can help students increase their faith in Jesus Christ by adding prophetic messages to their lessons (see Doctrine and Covenants 1:38).

With the 2024 Church scripture emphasis on the Book of Mormon in Sunday church instruction, *Come, Follow Me*, and seminary, there will be an increased focus on the Book of Mormon in gospel study and discussion across the Church. Mormon reminded readers from the first pages of the

Book of Mormon that it was written [by prophets] “by the spirit of prophecy and revelation” (title page). Students can increase their understanding of the teachings and doctrine of the Book of Mormon as they learn them in context of the messages of prophecy and revelation of modern prophets. As shared by Elder Gilbert,³ these five prophetic themes for young adults strengthen our students’ understanding of the Book of Mormon and help them as they come to know the Savior and learn of him and his gospel. We live in, as President Russell M. Nelson has said, “a most complicated time in the history of the world [when] the complexities and challenges leave many people feeling overwhelmed and exhausted,”⁴ and as we approach the Second Coming of our Savior Jesus Christ, it is not enough for our students to occasionally scroll past the words of the living prophets on social media. As religious educators and teachers, we need a Christ-centered strategy to empower young adults in our classes to know the messages God has for them. He has sent them these messages from living prophets, and as instructors, we sustain the prophets as we share their counsel as part of our religious education teaching. By seeking to understand and actively incorporate this approach in our curriculum, teaching, and ministering, our students will be blessed to better understand the counsel and blessings from these prophetic messages for them and know how to apply prophetic counsel in their lives.

Prophetic Themes Strengthen Young Adult Religion Courses as an Anchor

Elder Gilbert counseled that these suggested prophetic themes have been emphasized by the prophets and apostles specifically *for young adults*. He described the themes as an anchor in the Teachings of the Living Prophets curriculum.⁵ As religious educators and teachers, we can intentionally choose to include prophetic themes as an anchor for students and learners in our courses. The scriptures describe belief in God, along with faith and hope, as an anchor to the souls of men, “which would make them sure and steadfast” (Ether 12:4). As we teach prophetic themes and help students to gain a testimony of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and his living prophets, their belief in God can become more anchored, sure, and steadfast.

Students strengthen their understanding and testimony that Jesus Christ leads the Church as they strengthen their testimony of living prophets. The foundation of our testimonies is our Savior, Jesus Christ (see Helaman 5:12). Along with that testimony, young adults also need an unshakeable testimony

in his living prophets, especially in a world where confidence in organized religion continues to decrease.⁶ As we read in Ephesians 2:20, students need to understand that a key part of their testimony is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” By learning that the Savior and the words of his living prophets are inseparably connected (see Doctrine and Covenants 1:38), they will see that following the Savior means following the counsel of his living prophets.

As students see the connection between the Savior and prophetic messages, their increased desire to study the teachings of the living prophets will help them more effectively study and understand the teachings of the Savior and the prophets in the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, where they see the effects of following or not following prophets. As students recognize those effects, their desire to study the prophets’ messages can increase. As we read in the introduction to the Book of Mormon, “The book was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation.” Studying further scriptural examples also helps students see the blessings of following the prophets. “And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them” (Mosiah 3:13). The scriptures also show the tragedy when prophetic counsel was ignored. “Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction except they should repent. . . . But behold, I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost. And after rejecting so great a knowledge, my son, they must perish soon, unto the fulfilling of the prophecies which were spoken by the prophets, as well as the words of our Savior himself” (Moroni 8:27–29).

When students gain a testimony that following the Savior means knowing and following the counsel of his living prophets, they will know where to look in times of uncertainty. As Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recently counseled religious educators worldwide,

Can you see the importance of constantly bringing the teachings of the prophets and the apostles into your classroom discussions? The Lord’s directions for questions and concerns in our modern world come from those who

have been ordained with apostolic authority. If confidence in the prophets and apostles is waning, the distractions, the mis-directions, and the sophistries of the world can detach one from his or her spiritual moorings. Eagerly anticipate general conference and discuss the important teachings that follow. Clearly identify the sacred role of the Lord's anointed. As the world moves further away from the commandments of God, the Apostles' role will be increasingly important.⁷

Emphasizing prophetic teachings in our classes increases confidence in the Lord's apostles, which will be more important as we move towards the Second Coming of the Savior. Students will be less likely to be confused and deceived by worldly sources because they will know how to find truth in prophetic sources.

Incorporating these prophetic principles in our classes and discussions requires more effort for us as instructors. We must be attentive in nurturing our own discipleship so that we know and act on current counsel of living prophets, including what has been said in the most recent general conference, and so that our students can look to us as examples of what we teach. We cannot be satisfied that our lessons from ten years ago, five years ago, or even last year will be adequate to help students avoid deception today. As students better know and understand current issues prophets see ahead for them, they will be better prepared to follow their counsel.

It is difficult to follow prophetic counsel that a person does not know. In class, students can discuss prophetic counsel and blessings with a community of believers and have their faith strengthened together.⁸ If they have questions, they share those with each other and their instructor in an effort to "turn to truth-filled sources for guidance."⁹ As teachers, we pattern our instruction after the master teacher, Jesus Christ, and lead our students in a journey of studying the life of the Savior, current prophetic messages from living prophets, and the scriptures. In this way, we build faith and testimony in our students that can withstand whatever challenges may come.

Allow Prophetic Messages to Influence Curriculum

Elder Gilbert listed specific prophetic messages that could be applied to religious education courses (see table 1).¹⁰ Every instructor will have *their own inspiration and ideas* about how these talks can best "influence . . . your curriculum," taking into consideration individual class members, needs, and locations around the world. In his message, Elder Gilbert shared how his own revelation to listen to President Nelson's devotional "Choices for Eternity" on

a drive between Utah and Idaho strengthened his love for the young adults of the Church and reminded him of the miracle of a living prophet to teach them in challenging times. He pulled over to write down his impressions, and they led to his CES talk “Prophet in the Land.” As religious educators, we have all been counseled to let these prophetic messages influence our curriculum.¹¹ Recognizing that BYU and institute courses will approach curriculum differently, here are ideas for how these prophetic themes can be applied to the cornerstone BYU or institute course Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon. While this article cites sample institute lessons to provide a common template for discussion, the principles of these prophetic messages apply to many lessons that a BYU or institute instructor could teach in the Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon course and other courses. The principles of prophetic messages also apply to general gospel teaching in the Church’s Book of Mormon course of study and in other scripture courses and classes.

Table 1. Foundational addresses of current prophetic emphases for young adults

Current Prophetic Emphases for Young Adults	Foundational Addresses
1. Know your divine identity.	Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022).
2. Draw on the power of Jesus Christ and your covenants.	Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” <i>Liahona</i> , November 2021, 93–96; Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord” (Brigham Young University devotional, January 2022, 18).
3. Let God prevail, and follow His prophet.	Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i> , November 2020, 92–95; Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i> , May 2018, 93–96.
4. Teach truth with love.	Dallin H. Oaks and Clark G. Gilbert, “Stand Fast with Love in Proclaiming Truth” (Ensign College devotional, May 17, 2022); D. Todd Christofferson, “The First Commandment First” (Brigham Young University devotional, March 22, 2022).

5. Take charge of your testimony.	Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022); see Lawrence E. Corbridge, “Stand Forever” (Brigham Young University devotional, January, 22 2019); Robert S. Wood, “Be Ye Transformed by the Renewal of Your Mind” (Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, May 13, 2003); “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” S & I Doctrinal Mastery.
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1. Know Your Divine Identity

Elder Gilbert said,

If I was trying to understand the prophetic emphasis from the prophet regarding young adults, I would start with his recent worldwide convening of young adults and his message entitled “Choices for Eternity.” Many young adults today are struggling because they do not understand their true identity. President Nelson asked: “*Who are you?* First and foremost, you are a child of God. Second, as a member of the Church, you are a child of the covenant. And third, you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.” . . . The first prophetic emphasis for young adults we are highlighting is to help them know their divine identity. I strongly commend President Nelson’s full remarks in “Choices for Eternity” as a central resource to you as a religious educator working with young adults and the youth of the Church.¹²

As instructors, we can help students better understand their divine identity as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father as we incorporate President Nelson’s talk “Choices for Eternity” into our lessons. While “Choices for Eternity” could be used with almost any BYU or institute lesson, it would be especially applicable to Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon lessons such as Lesson 3, “Lehi’s Dream of the Tree of Life,” or related course lessons including scriptures about Lehi’s dream. In this lesson, many connections can be made between divine identity and the lessons of Lehi’s dream: (1) divine identity and feeling the love of God (1 Nephi 11:21–22); (2) divine identity and the joy of keeping covenants (1 Nephi 11:23); and (3) divine identity and holding fast to the word of God to stay focused on Jesus Christ (1 Nephi 15:23–25). Teaching these principles in connection to Book of Mormon scriptures can not only strengthen students’ understanding of their divine identity but also their testimonies of the Book of Mormon and the gospel principles shared there as they connect them with the Savior and the teachings of living and ancient prophets. Students will learn about how

recognizing God's great love for them, as seen in Lehi's dream, can help them remember their divine identity as a child of God. They will study why keeping ordinances and covenants and being part of the covenant of the restored gospel is "most joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 11:23). They can discuss sources who might pull them away from the truth (1 Nephi 12:16–18) and talk about why knowing their divine identity as disciple of Jesus Christ helps them hold fast to the iron rod and walk the covenant path (1 Nephi 15:23–25). By teaching President Nelson's prophetic counsel from "Choices for Eternity," we help students know and better understand their divine identities as they navigate an often confusing and challenging world.

2. Draw on the Power of Jesus Christ and Your Covenants

Elder Gilbert said, "Second, to preserve divine identity we must teach our young adults to draw on the power of Jesus Christ by keeping their covenants. President Nelson has taught: 'Everything taught in the temple, through instruction and through the Spirit, increases our understanding of Jesus Christ. His essential ordinances bind us to Him through sacred priesthood covenants. Then, as we keep our covenants, He endows us with *His* healing, strengthening power. And oh, how we will need His power in the days ahead.'"¹³ This prophetic principle can again be applied to many lessons, but one example is Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon Lesson 7, "The Strengthening Power of Jesus Christ."

Using President Nelson's message "The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation" and related Book of Mormon principles helps students better understand the essential personal connection they need to have to the Savior as a "child of the covenant" and a "disciple of Jesus Christ." Students will draw strength from Jesus Christ as they gain greater understanding about the "infinite and eternal" (Alma 34:14) power his atonement has as a central element of their testimony to strengthen them in difficult times. As they read President Nelson's counsel, "If you and I are to withstand the forthcoming perils and pressures, it is imperative that we each have a *firm* spiritual foundation built upon the rock of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ,"¹⁴ scriptures such as Helaman 5:12, about the Savior as a sure foundation, encourage young adults to stay anchored and "sure and steadfast" in their testimony of him. Learning about Jesus Christ¹⁵ and his power to strengthen us also empowers students to know he will help them as President Nelson says, so they "need not succumb to the unique anxieties of this era."¹⁶ Students will learn that as they rely on Jesus Christ and their

covenants, he will help them turn anxieties and weaknesses into strengths that allow them to best contribute to the kingdom of God (Ether 12:27).¹⁷ They can also discuss the blessings that come from relying on the Savior and honoring covenants through being “steadfast and immovable” (Mosiah 5:15).¹⁸ As President Nelson promised, “When spiritual earthquakes occur, you will be able to stand *strong* because your spiritual foundation is solid and immovable.”¹⁹ Students will find and should be encouraged to choose Book of Mormon scriptures that help secure their spiritual foundation as they look for strength in the Savior in keeping their covenants. In times of greatest difficulty throughout their lives, they will remember they can always return to the Book of Mormon “to gain peace in this life” (introduction to the Book of Mormon).

Allow Prophetic Messages to Influence the Way You Teach and Minister to Students

I attended Elder Gilbert’s 2023 talk to Church educators when it was recorded in October 2022. Also, as an adjunct instructor of Religious Education at Brigham Young University, I teach a block class of Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon the second half of the semester. At the time of Elder Gilbert’s talk, my BYU class had just started, and I was able to immediately incorporate many of the prophetic messages in my fall syllabus and then again more fully into my winter class syllabus. I have now taught three semesters with these prophetic messages as a foundational part of my BYU Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon class. While I already had a strong testimony of the power of current prophetic messages to influence young adult religion courses, it has been notable to see how these messages have had an impact on helping students better understand principles of the Book of Mormon, as well as on strengthening their testimonies of the Prophet Joseph Smith, in class discussions and in their assignments and assessments. As one of my previous students recently shared with me,

I had a wonderful experience with the talk entitled “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation” by President Nelson. When he says, “The Restoration is a process, not an event, and will continue until the Lord comes again,” it made me understand better the part that I can play in the restoration. It wasn’t just a one moment thing back in Joseph Smith’s time but is a continuous enlightenment that I have the privilege of being a part of. It all comes down to the temple: through completing my own ordinances and often doing ordinances for the dead, I am able to better feel the spirit, but also continue the Restoration of the Gospel.²⁰

In my class, prophetic messages are included in the weekly reading schedule every class period to strengthen understanding of Book of Mormon teachings and doctrine and to enhance discussion of scholarly articles about the Book of Mormon. As students link prophetic messages to Book of Mormon principles, it helps strengthen their understanding of scriptural literacy and exegesis methods for studying the Book of Mormon, which can be a challenging concept for them to learn, especially in a short block class.²¹ While BYU courses might apply these prophetic messages to individualized class scripture outlines instead of a manual outline, and institute classes could use in-class activities instead of graded assessments, the following examples can be applied to use prophetic messages as learning opportunities in a classroom setting (see table 2). Variations of these examples can be applied to other lessons and other courses for BYU and institute:

Table 2. Current prophetic emphases for young adults—example lessons from Teachings and Doctrines of the Book of Mormon (Rel. 275)

Current Prophetic Emphases for Young Adults	Foundational Addresses	Example lessons from Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon (Rel. 275)
1. Know your divine identity.	Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022).	Lesson 3, “Lehi’s Dream of the Tree of Life”; Lesson 4, “The Fall of Adam and Eve and the Gift of Agency”; Lesson 17, “Belonging to the Lord’s Church.”
2. Draw on the power of Jesus Christ and your covenants.	Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” <i>Liahona</i> , November 2021, 93–96; Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord” (Brigham Young University devotional, January 18, 2022).	Lesson 6, “The Infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ”; Lesson 7, “The Strengthening Power of Jesus Christ”; Lesson 9, “Faith in Jesus Christ”; Lesson 28, “Come Unto Christ.”

<p>3. Let God prevail, and follow His prophet.</p>	<p>Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” <i>Ensign or Liahona</i>, November 2020, 92–95; Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” <i>Ensign or Liahona</i>, May 2018, 93–96.</p>	<p>Lesson 13, “The Gathering of Israel in the Last Days”; Lesson 24, “The Lord’s Power of Deliverance”; Lesson 25, “Prayer and Personal Revelation”; Lesson 26, “After the Trial of Your Faith.”</p>
<p>4. Teach truth with love.</p>	<p>Dallin H. Oaks and Clark G. Gilbert, “Stand Fast with Love in Proclaiming Truth” (Ensign College devotional, May 17, 2022); D. Todd Christofferson, “The First Commandment First” (Brigham Young University devotional, March 2022 ,22).</p>	<p>Lesson 2, “Responding to the Lord’s Prophets”; Lesson 23, “Obedience to God’s Commandments”; Lesson 19, “Living Righteously in a Day of Wickedness”; Lesson 20, “The Blessings of Religious Freedom.”</p>
<p>5. Take charge of your testimony.</p>	<p>Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022); see Lawrence E. Corbridge, “Stand Forever” (Brigham Young University devotional, January 22, 2019); Robert S. Wood, “Be Ye Transformed by the Renewal of Your Mind” (Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, May 13, 2003); “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” S & I Doctrinal Mastery.</p>	<p>Lesson 4, “Search the Scriptures”; Lesson 11, “Pressing Forward on the Covenant Path”; Lesson 14, “Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God”; Lesson 18, “Becoming More Like Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.”</p>

3. Let God Prevail, and Follow His Prophet

Elder Gilbert said, “To help young adults know their divine identity and draw on the power of Jesus Christ, we must teach them to put God first and follow His prophet. Nowhere has this message been taught more powerfully than in President Nelson’s charge to “let God prevail.”²² President Nelson gave

additional explanation, “If we will allow it, there are many ways this Hebraic interpretation of *Israel* [‘let God prevail’] can help us.”²³ He asked,

The question for each of us, regardless of race, is the same. Are *you* willing to let God prevail in your life? Are *you* willing to let God be the most important influence in your life? Will you allow His words, His commandments, and His covenants to influence what you do each day? Will you allow His voice to take priority over any other? Are you *willing* to let whatever He needs you to do take precedence over every other ambition? Are you *willing* to have your will swallowed up in His? Consider how such willingness could bless you.²⁴

As we teach this prophetic message, we can encourage students to search the Book of Mormon to discover what it has meant to let God prevail through scriptural history while they also consider their willingness to let God prevail in their own lives.

Teach and Minister to Students

- Use Lesson 13, “The Gathering of Israel in the Last Days,” as an example. In “Let God Prevail,” President Nelson said, “For centuries, prophets have foretold this gathering, and it is happening right now! As an essential prelude to the Second Coming of the Lord, it is *the most* important work in the world!”²⁵ What does the Book of Mormon teach us about the importance of gathering Israel? (See 1 Nephi 10:12–14; 1 Nephi 15:12–15; 3 Nephi 21:1–7.)
- Ask students to identify specific counsel (one principle) from President Nelson’s talk about how to let God prevail in our lives. Have them search Book of Mormon scriptures to find an example of someone who followed this principle, or ask how this principle helps us be “of Israel” or can help us. Ask them to discuss with a partner then share with the class.
- President Nelson said, “My dear brothers and sisters, as you choose to let God prevail in your lives, you will experience for yourselves that our God is ‘a God of miracles.’”²⁶ When do we see examples in the Book of Mormon of people who let God prevail and then had miracles happen? (See Mosiah 24 [people of Alma]; Alma 56 [Helaman’s two thousand stripling warriors]; Helaman 13–16 [Samuel the Lamanite]; 3 Nephi 1:1–25 [Nephites and the sign of the Savior’s birth].)

- During their next few weeks of Book of Mormon study, ask students to follow President Nelson’s counsel to “make a list of all that the Lord has promised He will do for covenant Israel. . . . Ponder these promises. Talk about them with your family and friends. Then live and watch for these promises to be fulfilled in your own life.”²⁷ Follow up in subsequent classes to find out what they are learning.
- As an instructor, share how you have seen specific blessings as you have let God prevail in your life. As you see examples of students letting God prevail in their lives during the term, express your gratitude for their faith and examples.

4. *Teach Truth with Love*

Elder Gilbert said,

If you have watched the way our prophets and apostles teach, you will notice a pattern of teaching truth, even in the face of criticism. They do this with love, empathy, and Christlike concern for others, but they still teach the truths they are commanded to teach. . . . President Dallin H. Oaks [said], “Please remember the responsibility we, members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, have as Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must declare the truth as God has revealed it. We are not free to pick and choose which truths we will preach and defend.”²⁸

In President Oaks’s message, one of the truths he addressed was combating racism. He shared President Nelson’s strong statements about abandoning attitudes of racism and then counseled, “A gospel-centered approach to combating racism empowers all parties to support, apply, and teach the power and light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”²⁹ We can help students gain a stronger commitment to abandoning racism by studying these prophetic messages with our classes, incorporating them with the power of scripture messages.

Teach and Minister to Students

- Using Lesson 23, “Obedience to God’s Commandments,” as an example with this talk, ask students to look for Book of Mormon examples when the prophets declared the truth God had revealed, and how the people responded. (See 1 Nephi 2:11–12, 18–21; Mosiah 2: 20–21, 41; Mosiah 11–17.)
- One of the truths President Nelson and President Oaks counsel young adults and all Church members about in these prophetic

messages is combatting racism. Ask students to look in the Book of Mormon for examples of when they see people who united against attitudes of prejudice (see 2 Nephi 26:33; Alma 23–24, 27; 53:10–22; 56–57; 4 Nephi 1:17) or were divided by them (see Jacob 3:9; Alma 43; Alma 54:16–24). While the context of unity and prejudice in the Book of Mormon may be different from ours in modern society, what can we learn from these examples?

- Be a personal role model to students by living and teaching how the power of Jesus Christ can combat racism. Reach out personally to students who may need additional ministering.
- An effective way for class members to minister to each other can be through assigned messaging groups (e.g., text or WhatsApp) where students can share feelings about their reading and experiences in a community of believers with their peers during the term or semester.³⁰ Ask students to share in their class messaging group something they learned from President Oaks’s message and how they are following prophetic counsel to stand up to racial prejudice.

5. *Take Charge of Your Testimony*

Elder Gilbert said, “If you want to follow the prophet, watch for what he repeats, paying careful attention when he uses the term ‘I *plead* with you.’ In his general conference address entitled ‘Overcome the World and Find Rest,’ President Nelson stated: ‘I extend to members of the entire Church the same charge I gave to our young adults last May. I urged them then—and I *plead* with you now—to take charge of your own testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel.’”³¹ We can help our students not just strengthen their testimonies but “take charge of [their testimonies]” through our intentional use of prophetic messages in our lessons.

Teach and Minister to Students

- Using Lesson 28, “Come unto Christ,” ask students to look at how Book of Mormon prophets also invited us to focus on our testimonies of the Savior (see 2 Nephi 1:10–11; Jacob 3:1–4; Moroni 10:30–33). How do these invitations compare with President Nelson’s invitation today to “take charge of [our testimonies]”? How can we act on President Nelson’s invitation?

- How can reading the Book of Mormon help us “take charge of our testimonies?” How can our study of the Book of Mormon be different as we “take charge of our testimonies”?³²
- Ask students to look for examples of how the living prophets have shared their testimonies online (e.g., on social media, including bearing testimony of the Book of Mormon; in “Hear Him” videos). What can we learn from the living prophets and other church leaders about taking charge of our testimonies?
- In their class reading journal, have students write their testimony at the beginning of the Lesson 1 class period. Ask them to write their testimony again at the end of the class. How can studying and applying the words of the living prophets and the teachings of the Book of Mormon make a difference in their lives going forward?
- As instructors, we can intentionally share our testimonies with our students in *every* class or at different points in the lesson. BYU instructors can also share testimonies of prophetic principles through student feedback in assessments. Students will know they can count on our testimony of the Savior as they work to take charge of theirs.

Prophetic Themes as an Anchor in Other Religion Courses

Elder Gilbert reminded religious educators that these prophetic messages focus on talks that were given specifically to young adults of the Church. While we often ask our students if they are listening to our messages, or wonder if they are, Elder Gilbert has asked us as religious educators if *we* are listening to these prophetic messages and if they are “impacting how we teach and minister to our students.”³³ As we study the messages and pray about how to apply them to our specific classes and how to help specific students we teach, we will know how we can best incorporate them into our curriculum. Our testimonies of the importance of living prophets’ counsel in our lives can help us be creative as we look for ways to apply these prophetic messages to our various courses.³⁴

Here are some examples of how President Nelson’s anchor talk “Choices for Eternity”³⁵ can be applied to other BYU and institute courses. As suggested for Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon lessons, this talk can be especially impactful when it is introduced with one of the course’s beginning lessons because then President Nelson’s counsel will be familiar to

students as they continue through the term and can be referenced in other lessons. With Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel (Rel. 250), President Nelson's counsel to "take charge of your testimony" reinforces principles of Lesson 2, "Strengthening Our Testimony of the Living Christ," as students begin to work to "own [their testimony]" of Jesus Christ and the gospel from the beginning of the course. For the Eternal Family course (Rel. 200), Lesson 3, "Our Divine Nature and Destiny," is an ideal lesson to share President Nelson's counsel about divine identity.

In Foundations of the Restoration (Rel. 225) Lesson 3, "Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge," President Nelson's detailed counsel about seeking answers to questions and revelation can guide students' learning when he says, "If you have questions—and I hope you do—seek answers with the fervent desire to believe." Similar counsel could also be used in beginning lessons for the course Answering My Gospel Questions, Learning by Faith (Rel. 280). In the Divine Gift of Forgiveness (Rel. 290) Lesson 1, "The Gift of Repentance and the Joy of Being Clean," instructors can discuss President Nelson's counsel about divine identity and the Savior's power of forgiveness if we will repent and come unto him:

He demonstrated His ultimate love when He sent His Only Begotten Son to die for you—to be your Savior and your Redeemer! Through His Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ overcame the world. Therefore, He is 'mighty to . . . cleanse [you] from all unrighteousness.' He will deliver you from your most excruciating circumstances in His own way and time. As you come unto Him in faith, He will guide, preserve, and protect you. He will heal your broken heart and comfort you in your distress. He will give you access to His power. And He will make the impossible in your life become possible.³⁶

Teachers of other religious education courses, including seminary instructors, will find that as they study these prophetic messages, they can also easily incorporate prophetic messages in their curriculum throughout the term to bless the lives of their students. As an additional benefit to us as instructors, our lives will also be blessed from better knowing and following the prophetic counsel we have been given.

Religious Educators' Role to Help President Nelson Prepare Young Adults for Their Immortal Experience

In "Choices for Eternity," President Nelson spoke about attending a university president's inauguration and of the role of higher education. He said:

I thought about the countless educators worldwide who are dedicated to teaching men and women your age. Education is very important. I consider it a religious responsibility. The glory of God is intelligence. There is a major difference, however, between the responsibilities of secular educators and my responsibility as the senior Apostle on earth. Their job is to educate and prepare you for your *mortal* experience—meaning, how to succeed in your life’s work. My responsibility is to educate and prepare you also for your *immortal* experience—meaning, how to gain eternal life.

As religious educators, we can assist President Nelson and the Lord’s living prophets with their responsibility to educate and prepare young adults for their immortal experience. We can help them prepare for their life’s work as we teach the Savior’s messages for them from his living prophets. While we can give students an assignment or a grade or a well-prepared lesson, we cannot give them a testimony of Jesus Christ. However, with the light of our faith in the Savior and his living prophets as a guide, we can help them anchor their testimonies in prophetic messages and in the scriptures. We can be spiritual mentors for our students when they know of our love for them and of our unshakeable testimonies that shine as examples for them of following the Savior and his living prophets. We might wish for our students the situation of the Nephites: “There was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken; for they knew that it must needs be that they must be fulfilled” (3 Nephi 5:1). While the situation of the Nephites is different than ours, their testimonies can inspire us in our teaching efforts. If now or later in their lives our students question their faith or struggle with spiritual doubts, they can be strengthened in their resolve to move forward in faith³⁷ as they remember our example of unwavering faith in the Savior and his prophets. We can be the religious educators whose lessons give students testimony-building tools that anchor them in spiritual safety (Alma 48:7–9) and help them avoid deception as they navigate challenges (Doctrine and Covenants 52:14), empowering them to accomplish the impossible³⁸ and helping them believe they can seek and expect miracles as they do.³⁹ In John 17:3 the Savior said, “And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” As we walk alongside our students in learning the scriptures, the doctrine of Christ, these prophetic messages, and other current messages of living prophets, we will lead them towards the ultimate education, coming to know our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, and moving forward on the covenant path to return to live with them again.

Notes

1. Clark G. Gilbert, “A Prophet in the Land: Current Prophetic Emphases to Young Adults” (Seminaries & Institutes annual broadcast, January 27, 2023), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/s-and-i-training/2022/01/13gilbert>.
2. Gilbert, “Prophet in the Land.”
3. Gilbert, “Prophet in the Land.”
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liabona*, November 2022, 95.
5. Gilbert, “Prophet in the Land.”
6. “Religion,” Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1690/Religion.aspx>.
7. Neil L. Andersen, “The Power of Jesus Christ and Pure Doctrine” (Seminaries & Institutes broadcast, June 11, 2023), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/language-recording/2023/06/12andersen>.
8. See D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Belonging,” *Liabona*, November 2022, 53–56.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/worldwide-devotional-for-young-adults/2022/05/12nelson>.
10. Gilbert, “Prophet in the Land.”
11. Gilbert, “Prophet in the Land.”
12. Gilbert, “Prophet in the Land.”
13. Gilbert, “Prophet in the Land.”
14. Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liabona*, November 2021, 93.
15. In April 2023 General Conference, President Russell M. Nelson counseled us to learn more about the Savior: “Learn more about His Atonement, His love, His mercy, His doctrine, and His restored gospel of healing and progression.” “The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ,” *Liabona*, May 2023, 127.
16. Nelson, “Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation.”
17. See also Ether 12:22–37.
18. See also Mosiah 5:1–15.
19. Nelson, “Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation.”
20. Personal correspondence to author, email, June 6, 2023, used with permission.
21. Eric D. Huntsman, “Teaching through Exegesis: Helping Students Ask Questions of the Text,” *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 6, no. 1 (2005): 11.
22. Gilbert, “A Prophet in the Land.”
23. Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” *Ensign* or *Liabona*, November 2020, 92–95.
24. Nelson, “Let God Prevail” (emphasis in original).
25. Nelson, “Let God Prevail.”
26. Nelson, “Let God Prevail.”
27. Nelson, “Let God Prevail.”
28. Gilbert, “A Prophet in the Land.”
29. Dallin H. Oaks, “Stand Fast with Love in Proclaiming Truth” (Ensign College devotional, May 17, 2022).
30. See Camey Andersen, “Single Adults: Creating Communities of Faith,” *Liabona*, October 2022.
31. Gilbert, “A Prophet in the Land.”

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32. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like Without It?,” *Ensign* or *Liabona*, November 2017, 60–63; see also Jacob 4:6.
 33. Gilbert, “A Prophet in the Land.”
 34. See Gerrit W. Gong, “Our Own Best Story,” *BYU Speeches*, April 11, 2023.
 35. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity.”
 36. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity.”
 37. President Russell M. Nelson said, “Our faith will always propel us forward.” See “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liabona*, April 2021, 104.
 38. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity.”
 39. Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liabona*, April 2022, 97–100.