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Deep Learning and Joy in the Lord

ELDER KIM B. CLARK

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It is a blessing to speak to the Seminaries and Institutes family all across the earth. I love you very much, and I am grateful for you and all that you do and all that you are. I pray the Lord's blessings upon you in the great work that lies before us.

My dear brothers and sisters, it is important work to teach, prepare, lift, and strengthen the rising generation. I feel an urgency and an intensity about that work. The youth and young adults of the Lord's Church face many difficult challenges and many wonderful opportunities. The world around them is filled with powerful technologies that are used for great good and terrible evil. Many of our young people are in countries affected by wars and rumors of wars, acts of terror, corruption, the destruction of families, political and social disruption, secularism, and the ravages of poverty, disease, and famine.

In the midst of all this commotion and turmoil, however, the Lord Jesus Christ is preparing His kingdom and His people for His return. He is moving

in power all across the earth to gather scattered Israel, to build up His kingdom, and to establish Zion. His arms of love and mercy are stretched out to the youth and young adults of His Church, inviting them to receive His healing, strengthening, and redeeming power in their lives.

The great war between good and evil that began in the premortal realm continues with growing intensity in the latter days. In that battle the youth and young adults of the rising generation are not at the home front. They are on the front lines, and they will play an increasingly crucial role in the great work of the Lord, which brings me to you.

You are right there on the front lines with the rising generation. When I think of you and what you do every day to touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of the youth and young adults of the Lord's Church, I think of Nephi's vision of our day: "And . . . I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory."¹

Nephi describes a divine process in which you are engaged in a central way. When you think about what you are doing teaching seminary and institute, I hope this passage will come to your minds. You are the instruments in God's hands in a divine process through which His precious children of the covenant are blessed with righteousness and receive His power and His glory.

This is what you do. You teach these wonderful young people the gospel of Jesus Christ, and you help them receive divine power in the priesthood, in the temple, in the companionship of the Holy Ghost, in the holy scriptures, and in sacred covenants and ordinances. It is God's power, and He gives it to His beloved sons and daughters so that they can love, teach, and serve with faith and hope in Him, doing His work all of their lives.

It might be hard sometimes to connect Nephi's inspiring vision to the reality of your seminary class at 6:15 in the morning or to the late-evening institute class with a lot of tired college students. I have seen my share of bleary-eyed teenagers early in the morning. And I surely know what tired college students look like. But I have seen what happens to those teenagers and those college students when a teacher who loves them teaches them with the Spirit of the Lord. I have seen what happens in their hearts and in their souls when that teacher opens the power of the scriptures to them and helps them

learn deeply in the Lord's way. I know that because that is what happened to all of my children. And it is what is happening to my grandchildren.

The youth and young adults that you teach are amazing. But we need many, many more of them to receive the blessings of the priesthood and the temple, to serve missions, to marry in the temple, to create eternal families, to serve the Lord in His kingdom, and to be a light to the world—many more of them. That means you need to keep getting better and better at what you do. The Lord needs you to be even more powerful and more effective in this great work.

Joy in the Lord

I want to share with you today some thoughts that I hope will help you as you pursue that divine purpose. My message is simple: we need to do more to help the youth and young adults of the Church experience joy—authentic, spiritual joy—in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe the best way to do that is through deep learning of the doctrine of Christ in the Lord's way. It is my witness and testimony to you that deeply learning the doctrine of Jesus Christ leads to joy in the Lord.

As President Russell M. Nelson has taught: "My dear brothers and sisters, the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives. When the focus of our lives is on God's plan of salvation . . . and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. Joy comes from and because of Him. He is the source of all joy."²

That is the joy our young people need to feel. It protects them against evil, motivates them to be righteous, feeds their desire to always have the Holy Ghost with them, and draws them to the Lord.

The Savior has given us a wonderful pattern in the Book of Mormon to help you help your students find joy in Him: "Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed. And ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world."³

When the Savior appeared to the people at the temple at Bountiful, He loved them, taught them His doctrine, and blessed them. They felt great joy. In this passage the Savior calls you to come unto Him and, through the power

of the Holy Ghost, see Him work, feel His love, and experience His joy. Then He commands you to take what you have seen and felt to your students: love them, teach them His doctrine, invite them to come unto Him and feel His joy. If the love, doctrine, light, and joy of Jesus Christ are in you, you can inspire them and encourage them to seek out their own private, personal, spiritual experiences with the Lord.

Joy and Deep Learning

The learning that leads to joy is deep learning in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and it must be done in the Lord's way. Deep learning is learning of the whole soul—the mind, the heart, the body, and the immortal spirit. Deep learning increases the student's power to do three things:⁴

1. *Know and Understand*

First is to know and understand. This is knowledge of the mind and of the heart. Applied to faith in Jesus Christ, for example, students learn that faith in Christ is a principle of action and power. Through the witness of the Spirit, they feel the truth of that principle and begin to see more clearly, desire more deeply, and thus understand in their hearts more completely the workings of that principle in their lives.

2. *Take Effective, Righteous Action*

Second is to take effective, righteous action. Students learn how to apply the principle of faith in Jesus Christ in their lives and then actually do it. For example, they may decide to act with faith in the Savior to have the courage to invite a friend to read the Book of Mormon. As they act with faith in Him, their confidence in Him grows and the Lord blesses them with greater faith.

3. *Become More Like Our Heavenly Father*

The third is to become more like our Heavenly Father. Becoming is a process of change in the character and very nature of the student. It comes through the redeeming and strengthening power of Jesus Christ. Applied to the principle of faith in the Savior, it means that a student increasingly becomes a more faithful person. Faith in Christ becomes an attribute of their character, who they are, as they repeatedly and consistently grow in knowledge and understanding of faith in Jesus Christ, act with faith in Him to do what He

wants done, and seek His gifts and blessings to become like Him and His Father.

These three dimensions of deep learning interact with and reinforce one another. Becoming a faithful person increases a student's capacity to know and understand. Deeper understanding motivates more effective action, which in turn creates new insights and leads to stronger character. There is great joy in each element of deep learning—joy in new understanding, joy in righteous action, joy in becoming more like the Father and the Son.

The Lord's Way to Learn Deeply: Three Invitations

The Lord's way to learn deeply is simple but powerful. Here is the Lord's description of learning in His way:

- “If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light.”⁵
- “Prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves.”⁶
- “Teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.”⁷
- “Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you.”⁸
- “Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom.”⁹
- “Seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”¹⁰
- “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once.”¹¹
- “Let one speak at a time and let all listen . . . that all may be edified of all.”¹²
- “Above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity.”¹³

These beautiful passages from the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants identify three interactive, reinforcing elements in the Lord's way to learn deeply: The first is diligently studying, seeking, preparing, and obeying.¹⁴ The second is gathering to teach one another, in the bonds of charity, guided by an inspired teacher, attended by the grace of Jesus Christ. The third is receiving revelation, inspiration, and other spiritual gifts that come through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The teacher in the Lord's way plays an active, inspired role in engaging students in all elements of deep learning. Two things are essential: first, that you have the Holy Ghost with you, and second, that you love the students.

You have a wonderful resource—the *Gospel Teaching and Learning* handbook¹⁵—to help you teach so that your students will learn in the Lord’s way. So, let me give you an assignment: I want you to read and study the handbook through the lens of deep learning, especially of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which leads to joy. Once you understand that deep learning for joy is your objective, it will change how you apply the powerful principles developed in the handbook. Let me give you three simple examples (there are many more):

- You will ask your students to come prepared to class to teach one another.
- You will put priority on helping your students develop Christlike attributes.
- You will make joy a shared purpose in your classroom, and students will regularly share testimonies of joy.

My dear brothers and sisters, I know you already do many amazing and wonderful things to help your students get the gospel of Jesus Christ deep in their hearts and experience joy in Him. I know of your sacrifice and your devotion. And so does the Lord.

I want to close today with three invitations. I know that if you act on these invitations, you will help your students learn even more deeply in the Lord’s way and experience even more joy in Him.

Invitation 1: Eternal Identity and Purpose

I invite you to help your students learn who they really are. Help them see and feel and know that they truly are children of God, His beloved sons and daughters. Help them understand the meaning and implications of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” when it proclaims that each of your students “has a divine nature and destiny . . . and [an] eternal identity and purpose.”¹⁶

Please help them feel deep in their hearts that they are spiritual beings having a mortal experience. The Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, suffered and died for them so that they can “progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”¹⁷ That is Heavenly Father’s plan for them. Please help make His plan real to them.

Teach them that they were born of Heavenly Parents to learn and grow and become like Them. Learning is central to the purpose of premortal and

mortal life and to their eternal salvation. They need to learn about the things of God and the things of the world so they can fulfill God’s purposes in their lives. Help them see that learning is essential in God’s eternal plan and, thus, to their eternal purpose and divine destiny.

Invitation 2: The Lord’s Way to Deep Learning

I invite you to help your students learn how to learn in the Lord’s way. You do this in part by example. In a very powerful way, *how* you teach is *what* you teach your students about the Lord’s way to learn. If you create for them experiences in learning in the Lord’s way, they will learn His way. If you don’t, they won’t.

I hope you will teach your students the Lord’s way to learn by your own example. But I also hope you will teach them His way directly and consciously, with intent. There is a wonderful opportunity to do that in Doctrinal Mastery,¹⁸ where the principles of “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge” teach exactly the Lord’s way of learning.¹⁹ As you teach those principles throughout the year, you will teach them the Lord’s way to learn. That teaching can be done as well in the courses you teach in institute.

Please help your students realize that the Lord’s way applies to everything they study. The particular methods that they encounter in their classes in secondary or postsecondary education will be up to the teachers they have. But your students can always be actively engaged, diligent in their study, and blessed with the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Please invite your students to take the Holy Ghost with them to school.

Invitation 3: Repentance and Learning

I invite you to teach your students that repentance is central to deep learning. Repentance is the Lord’s process for personal learning, spiritual growth, and becoming more and more like Him. Your students learn in the Lord’s way through the redeeming and strengthening power of Jesus Christ working in their lives, opening to them His mercy and His grace.

Please help your students understand that repentance is the divine process through which they can become more like the Savior all the time. Sometimes their repentance will be about something they need to stop doing. Sometimes it will be about something they need to start doing. Please help them know that repentance is much more than telling the Lord and their bishop they did something wrong. To sin is to turn away from the Lord. To repent is to

re-turn to Him. Repentance requires a change of heart and mind, a change of life tailored to the student's personal situation.

But please also teach them that repentance can bless them continually. It is the way the Lord helps them do better and be better all through their lives. That requires them to change and grow, and that means they need to repent, turn more fully to the Savior, give Him their hearts more completely all the time. That turning process and that giving process is lifelong. It is critical to deep learning.

Testimony

I give you this promise: If you will teach your students who they really are, how to learn deeply in the Lord's way, and the divine principle of repentance, they will learn deeply the doctrine of Jesus Christ, their faith in Him and love for Him will grow, and they will have joy in the Lord. Both you and your students will experience this marvelous promise of the Lord: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy."²⁰

I know that promise is true. I give you my witness that God our Father lives. Jesus is the Christ. He lives! This is Their holy work. I so testify and leave you with my love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. **RE**

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Notes

1. 1 Nephi 14:14.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Ensign*, November 2016, 82.
3. 3 Nephi 18:24–25.
4. The pattern of "know, do, become" has been used widely as a framework for leadership development and in discussion of the Lord's plan for the spiritual development of His children. See Thomas S. Monson, "To Learn, to Do, to Be," *Ensign*, November 2008, 60–62, 67–68; and Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, November 2000, 32–34. For an in-depth treatment of each of the elements of this pattern, see the three-volume series of books by David A. Bednar: *Increase in Learning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), *Act in Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), and *Power to Become* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014).
5. D&C 88:67.
6. D&C 88:74.
7. D&C 88:77.
8. D&C 88:78.
9. D&C 88:118.

10. D&C 88:118.
11. D&C 88:122.
12. D&C 88:122.
13. D&C 88:125.
14. As used here, "obeying" replaces "sanctify yourselves." President Harold B. Lee taught that "the way to sanctify yourself [is] by keeping the commandments of God." *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000), 30.
15. *Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012).
16. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 2010, 129.
17. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."
18. Doctrinal Mastery is an initiative for seminary that "builds upon and replaces previous initiatives, such as Scripture Mastery, Basic Doctrines, and Seek Truth." "What Is Doctrinal Mastery?" *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* <https://www.lds.org/objective/doctrinal-mastery/what-is-doctrinal-mastery>.
19. See section "Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge," in *Doctrinal Mastery Core Document* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 2.
20. D&C 11:13.