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Educating for Eternity: Key Principles Governing True Teaching

Mark F. Zimbelman

Mark F. Zimbelman is the Selvoy J. Boyer assistant professor of accounting at BYU.

Shortly after accepting employment at BYU, I sensed I had significantly integrated my life roles. Let me explain. Previously, I worked at another university and also had Church duties that required significant time in both preparation and service. Much of the preparation involved studying Church materials and preparing talks and lessons. Considering my family commitments, I felt as though I had three roles—each of which could take all my time and energy: work, church, and family. On occasion, I broke from work to develop a talk for church. Although I saw a clear connection between my church and family responsibilities, time spent studying the gospel seemed unrelated to my work duties. Thus, I felt divided in my major life roles.

Working at BYU is unique because integrated into all we do is a constant effort to increase in spirit. After being here for three years, I realize that to fulfill my obligations as a faculty member, I must continue to grow spiritually. To magnify my career duties, I must be guided by revelation. I am convinced that to touch the lives of my students, I regularly need to expend significant effort to obtain guidance from the Spirit. Thus, although I still have separate tasks in my life roles, my spiritual preparation now seems vital for fulfilling my professional duties.

Though much of this essay applies to educators at BYU, I believe the principles elaborated below have application to a much-wider audience. Specifically, in the first section, I present two key premises that should govern our professional responsibilities as educators. In section two, I discuss some insights from the words of the prophets on teaching and learning that should

govern our teaching activities. In the third section, I discuss the role of teachers in helping students become fully converted. The final section provides some thoughts on a career as a religious educator, including guidance on pride, priestcraft, and the proficiency required of a religious educator.

Premises Guiding a Religious Educator's Professional Life

1. Truth is hierarchical. The Doctrine and Covenants states, "All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself" (D&C 93:30). This scripture suggests that the body of truth contains independent categories of truths. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained that there is a hierarchy of truth: "The restored gospel of Jesus Christ gives us a different view of truth. To begin with, there is no democracy among truths. They are not of equal significance."^{clxxxix}1 He describes three categories of truth. The first category contains momentary facts or accurate descriptions of reality, such as the current weather report. The next group includes more important truths but not "ultimate truths." He adds: "Some of these . . . are verifiable by the very serviceable scientific method. These truths can be very useful and valuable."^{cxc}2 However, he points out that truths in this category are continually being revised as science develops new theories and measurement methods. Although Elder Maxwell admits that these truths are valuable, he reminds us that the "accumulation of knowledge without purpose and of information without wisdom constitutes ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth."^{cxc}3

The highest category of truth contains the "deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). These come to us by revelation and are not subject to change.^{cxcii}4 Even within this category, there appears to be a hierarchy among truths. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: "As regards knowledge, the highest priority religious knowledge is what we receive in the temple. That knowledge is obtained from the explicit and symbolic teachings of the endowment, and from the whisperings of the Spirit that come as we are desirous to seek and receptive to hear the revelation available to us in that sacred place."^{cxciii}5

One implication of this hierarchy of truth is that "we constantly need to distinguish between the truths which are useful and those which are crucial, and between truths which are important and those which are eternal."^{cxciv}6 This hierarchy of truth has important implications for the activities of faculty who work in a religious environment such as that at BYU.

2. Conversion is the ultimate purpose of a religious educator's career. I believe the ultimate purpose of BYU is to help students become converted and to incorporate the highest truths into their lives. The quest to internalize eternal truth captures the meaning of the statement that BYU posts at its entrance: "The glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). Elder Oaks explained BYU's purpose as follows: "Whereas the world teaches us to know something, the gospel teaches us to become something, and it is far more significant to become than it is to know. . . . In addition to our concern with learning, Brigham Young University is also concerned with becoming, with the conversion of students and also of teachers. . . . The mission of the gospel (and in this sense the highest mission of Brigham Young University) is not just to enlarge what we know, but to change what we are."^{cxcv}7

In this same spirit, BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson encouraged faculty to spend time counseling students to help them become converted. He said, "I recognize, of course, that time is often short and that students sometimes do their best to avoid faculty counseling. . . . Please strive constantly to draw close to your students; give them spiritual food along with academic advice. . . . It is a serious undertaking. Without faculty counseling we cannot possibly succeed. With it, we can save hundreds of students each year."^{cxcvi}8

Thus, we are charged with transferring not only knowledge but also the application of eternal knowledge so that our students progress spiritually as well as mentally. Interestingly, as individuals become converted, their desire to learn all categories of truth increases. Elder Henry B. Eyring referred to the change that a convert experiences: “The change that comes is a desire to be someone even better, to reach for more light, and to give greater service to others. Those desires always lead to a hunger for education, to learn what is true, what is useful, and what is beautiful.”^{cxcvii}9 Thus, as BYU excels at helping faculty and students become fully converted, students and faculty will be more likely to excel at learning lesser categories of truth as well. I find it interesting to consider the meaning of the portion of Doctrine and Covenants 93:36 that is not posted at BYU’s entrance. The full verse reads: “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, *light and truth*” (D&C 93:36; emphasis added). Given that the Savior calls Himself the Light of the World and refers to Himself as the Truth, I believe that gaining intelligence involves becoming Christlike.^{cxcviii}10 Also, in modern scripture, we read that God’s glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Given that eternal life is the life that God lives and that God’s glory is giving man eternal life, we might conclude that gaining intelligence (or God’s glory) is gaining a fulness of God’s character.^{cxci}11 Thus, the ultimate purpose of education is not to obtain entrance to a career or gain knowledge but to become converted to truth and become like Him who is more intelligent than the rest of us. Teaching based on eternal principles facilitates this conversion process.

Revealed Principles on Teaching and Learning

Several key principles taught by the prophets can help us to be more effective teachers.

Teach by the Spirit—the Spirit teaches. I have often pondered the guidance Brigham Young gave Karl Maeser: “Neither the alphabet nor the multiplication table should be taught without the Spirit of God.”^{cc}12 I view this instruction as a lifelong challenge, and I believe President Young was teaching us that learning any topic, including secular truths, occurs when the Spirit sheds light. In support of this idea, President Young taught: “Men know how to construct railroads and all manner of machinery; they understand cunning workmanship, etc.; but that is all revealed to them by the Spirit of the Lord, though they know it not.”^{cci}13 More directly relevant to teaching is the following statement by President Young: “Now, I ask the wise, where did you get your wisdom? Was it taught you? Yes, I say it was taught you. By your professors in college? No, it was taught you by the influence of the spirit that is in man, and the inspiration of the Spirit of God giveth it understanding.”^{ccii}14 Thus, a crucial teaching tenet is to recognize that we cannot dispense learning to our students; rather, we must find ways to bring the Spirit of God to the minds of students so that learning can occur. This process becomes painfully obvious to me when I try to act as a font of knowledge to my students. Although a few may light up as an occasional stroke of light hits them, most quickly become disengaged; for these, I believe that little or no learning is taking place.

Teaching with the Spirit occurs when several conditions exist. First, teachers must diligently prepare so as to have the Spirit help them teach. Elder Maxwell taught: “When we speak about teaching by the Spirit it is not about a mystical process which removes responsibility from the . . . teacher for prayerful and pondering preparation. Teaching by the Spirit is not the lazy equivalent of going on ‘automatic pilot.’ We still need a carefully worked out ‘flight plan.’ Studying out something in one’s own mind is, in itself, an invitation to the Spirit in our preparations as well as in our presentations. We must not err, like Oliver Cowdery, by taking no thought except to ask God for His Spirit (D&C 9:7). The Lord is especially willing to take the lead of an already informed mind in which things have been ‘studied out.’”^{cciii}15

I also believe that before the Spirit will be able to teach, both the teacher and student must be mentally engaged. To engage my students, I use classroom activities that involve active learning with the goal of engaging students in efforts to internalize key information and principles. An underlying philosophy of these activities is that when students are involved in teaching each other, learning by the Spirit is more likely to occur. Brigham Young expressed this as follows: “A man who wishes to receive light and knowledge . . . will find that when he imparts knowledge to others he will also grow and increase.”^{cciv} 16 Though this comment is directed at spiritual knowledge, I believe it also applies to temporal learning.

Given Brigham Young’s instruction that all truth is learned by the Spirit, I believe teaching students to learn by the Spirit is an eternal skill. This can transform teaching a lesser category of truth into teaching the highest category of truth and lead to education for eternity. I have found that a vital prerequisite to teaching by the Spirit is having Christlike love for my students.

Be guided by charity, the pure love of Christ. Charity allows us to see our students clearly and to recognize that when they appear to be misbehaving, they are often crying out for help. I have often found that the student who speaks out in class needs compassion and understanding that come when I feel charity for him or her. Often, the reaction the student needs most from faculty runs counter to that which he or she usually gets in response to this type of behavior. To ensure the proper reaction in these circumstances, the classroom must develop a culture characterized by Christlike love. I have learned that I, as the teacher, can act as a catalyst to initiate this culture. I believe that charity comes as a spiritual endowment, so I must pray diligently for it and rely on the Lord to help me see my students as they are—children of God. Even so, I make an effort with this goal in mind to learn students’ names and to quickly get to know the students so this culture develops early in the class. The following counsel from President Boyd K. Packer is relevant: “It is important for a teacher to understand that little teaching will be accomplished, little learning will take place, unless a one-to-one relationship exists between the teacher and each student. . . . It means you take the time to learn thirty names, to check out thirty backgrounds, to draw thirty students into class discussions, to pass out thirty words of encouragement, all personalized. . . . The good teacher has already studied the lesson. The superb teacher also studies the students; he studies them seriously and intently.”^{ccv} 17

Getting to know students and truly loving each individual, especially the disruptive student, is one of the most rewarding and challenging aspects of teaching. As we come to know our students, we better understand the struggles they have with the course material. We can then better select the methods that will be most effective for engaging students in the course topics. *Engage students in the learning process.* In designing classroom activities, I am powerfully influenced by the premise that there is no democracy of truth. This knowledge suggests to me that class time should be used for the most valuable learning possible. Elder Maxwell stated: “Education that is only ‘for a season’ is narrow; it pertains only to a knowledge of things as they temporarily are, like today’s weather forecast or an airline schedule. Temporary facts are useful but terminal.”^{ccvi} 18 Although business practices and accounting techniques can quickly change and become obsolete, the ability to learn, reason, and apply judgment will be valuable not only for a career but also for eternity. This belief has important implications for what I do in the classroom and as well as for the future of education. If classroom activities are used to convey information that can be obtained through reading or technology (for example, the Internet), then I believe classrooms will be replaced with other methods. Time spent learning information should be moved outside the classroom and replaced with activities that create intelligence. As noted above, some knowledge, such as a weather report, may be temporarily useful but soon loses

value. On the other hand, knowledge of principles for using weather data to accurately forecast is more valuable. Further along this continuum is the ability to reason and develop judgment, while the intelligence of highest value entails the ability to utilize all truth and to live a Christlike life. Students who rely on the teacher to explain information they could learn independently will become dependent learners and struggle to become independent, continual learners. However, if students independently learn prior to class and if the classroom is used for interdependent learning activities that help them assimilate more than just information, then other methods will have difficulty replacing these activities. Activities such as these must require students and teachers to interact and develop the ability to reason and articulate their thinking processes regarding information they gained outside the classroom. The objective of these activities is to lead students to develop the judgment needed to solve problems in real settings. This pedagogy entails much more than simply delivering information in an entertaining manner but rather involves getting students to become engaged in the learning process both in and out of class. I believe that getting students to focus on the subject, not on me, is a key to helping them become independent learners.

Avoid the spotlight. The Church's teacher improvement manual clearly defines a teacher's role: "What is the role of teachers? It is to help individuals take responsibility for learning the gospel. . . Virginia H. Pearce . . . said: 'A teacher's goal is greater than just delivering a lecture about truth. It is to invite the Spirit and use techniques that will enhance the possibility that the learner will discover the truth [and] be motivated to apply it. . . . Therefore it is the pupil who has to be put into action. When a teacher takes the spotlight, becomes the star of the show, does all the talking, and otherwise takes over all the activity, it is almost certain that he is interfering with the learning of the class members. . . . The skilled teacher does not want students who leave the class talking about how magnificent and unusual the teacher is. This teacher wants students who leave talking about how magnificent the gospel is!'"^{ccvii}19

Although this instruction is centered on teaching in a Church setting, I believe it applies fully to teaching secular topics by the Spirit, as Brigham Young instructed us to do. Parker Palmer, a well-known author on reforming college-level teaching, has written the following: "I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about: students who learn are the finest fruits of teachers who teach. . . . Teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions."^{ccviii}20

One of Parker Palmer's precepts is that teachers need to remove themselves from the spotlight before the classroom community will be able to focus on the subject and learn most effectively. While I admit that I struggle with knowing how to do this and though I find it easy to get into the center of classroom attention, I believe that moving the attention away from me as the teacher is critical. Furthermore, I have found that for conversion to take place, it is important to focus the student on the Savior. Unfortunately, I have learned that even with my best efforts, I sometimes fall short of what my students really need. In those instances, I take comfort in knowing that the Lord can make up the difference.

The Atonement provides healing balm. Ultimately, even with our best efforts to be Christlike in mortality, we will make mistakes of judgment that cause individuals pain. Elder Bruce Hafen has written about how the heartbreaks we experience as natural men who are striving to become Saints persistently interact in a manner that can be painful.^{ccix}21 Similarly, Elder Oaks has taught that we all make mistakes, and he distinguishes mistakes from sins. He explains, "We should seek to avoid mistakes, since some mistakes have very painful consequences. But we do not seek

to avoid mistakes at all costs. Mistakes are inevitable in the process of growth in mortality.”^{ccx}22 Thus, while we should strive to protect students from painful experiences, we are required to assign grades, give potentially discouraging answers to questions, and administer other painful medicine. At times, we need to have a heart-to-heart talk with a student who is exhibiting behavior that will have zero tolerance in the workplace. In doing so, we must seek to be guided by the Spirit and use our best judgment.

Inspiration is especially important when we are attempting to administer justice to a “trouble student.” Just as a parent continually struggles to know if he or she is being too lenient or too harsh, I find that my best efforts fall short, as I do not always see things clearly. In times such as these, I take some comfort in knowing, and am humbly grateful, that the Savior’s Atonement can heal my students (and my family) from the negative consequences of my mistakes. Speaking of the effects of the Atonement to relieve us from the bitterness of mortality, Elder Bruce C. Hafen explained: “The Lord taught Adam that the Atonement was given to him and to his children to heal. . . . This healing power cleanses our spirits, upon condition of our repentance, when our souls are soiled with sin. It can also compensate for the effects of our sins upon others, when we are unable to make further restitution.”^{ccxi}23 Elder Hafen explains that many Latter-day Saints are burdened by their inability to make full restitution for the pains they cause others.

At times, we as faculty should call attention to our students’ mistakes so they can avoid them in the future. The scriptures teach us that after reproof we must show increased love (see D&C 121:43). Faculty must constantly strive to provide increased love after giving necessary reproof. Even so (with class sizes as they are), our students are likely to experience pain as they interpret feedback, such as a grade, as an indication that they are somehow blemished. Elder Hafen offers insight about the Atonement’s role in these circumstances: “There are many Latter-day Saints who labor under the misapprehension that they must . . . assume full responsibility to *compensate* for *all* the *effects* of [their] acts and shortcomings. . . . Sometimes . . . we *cannot* fully compensate for them. . . . [Thus,] we are utterly dependent on Christ, no matter how earnest our repentance.”^{ccxii}24

Temporal Experiences and Eternal Goals

In the highly competitive academic environment at BYU, some students feel intense pressure to succeed by getting high grades.^{ccxiii}25 Although this environment is less than Zion will ultimately be, I believe it lends faculty an incredible opportunity and immense responsibility to help students internalize gospel truths. The pressures in this setting are not unlike those of the business world; thus, becoming Christlike here will, hopefully, help them endure there.

I believe that the solution to many students’ troubles is to become more converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. While BYU’s religious education faculty are assigned to teach the words of the prophets, significant opportunities exist for faculty outside of religious education to help students internalize gospel truths. I believe that this environment provides powerful opportunities for students to apply gospel lessons that they may have learned all their life but never fully internalized or converted to intelligence. For example, many students struggle with the realization that they are not the smartest in class. This knowledge provides a powerful opportunity to help these students focus competition on themselves and away from others.

Compete against yourself, not others. One of the keys to becoming Christlike at BYU or in the world of business is to learn to deal humbly with competition. President Packer commented: “In this life we are constantly confronted with a spirit of competition. . . . We come to believe that wherever there is a winner there must also be a loser. To believe that is to be misled. In the eyes

of the Lord, everyone may be a winner. . . . If there is competition in His work, it is not with another soul—it's with our own former selves."^{ccxiv}26

In response to the intense competition at BYU, some students withdraw and lose motivation, whereas others resort to their natural-man instincts and develop enmity with both their fellow students and with faculty. Neither approach leads to effective learning or peace of mind. Steve Young explained how, during his professional football career, he learned to focus competition on himself. He said: "There's no more raw form of competition than football. In the end . . . one goes home a winner, one goes home a loser. This has permeated our whole society. . . . This is a dangerous way to think. My idea of competition has nothing to do with . . . anyone else. . . . I believe competition, in its pure form, is really about yourself. . . . I've learned to say to myself. . . . How did I play last week? How do I need to improve next week? . . . I truly believe that competition has nothing to do with seeing how much better you can be than the next guy. . . . If you just concentrate on improving yourself, you will have a very fulfilling life. . . . That's my concept of competition. It has nothing to do with anyone else."^{ccxv}27

In this quote, Steve Young emphasizes that competition should not lead to a desire to beat another. President Ezra Taft Benson explained that this desire is closely associated with pride: "The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means 'hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.' It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us. . . . Pride is essentially competitive in nature. . . . The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others."^{ccxvi}28

Soon after joining the Church, I went to play basketball with some young adults. After playing, I sensed that the members of the Church could be some of the most ruthless, intense competitors in the world! For at least a few, sportsmanship seemed far distant to the goal of winning. During the past two decades, this observation has been validated over many seasons of Church basketball, including one regional championship that erupted in a fistfight! In my BYU courses, I have sensed that some students view me as the referee in a crucial Church basketball game and that they want to get as much advantage as they can from me. I have seen that this response to competition normally leads a person to engage in behavior that is not Christlike. I believe that students who learn how to live as Christ would live in a competitive environment will find much more peace in their lifelong pursuit of excellence. Learning to deal with competition can be especially difficult when someone first realizes that he or she will not always win every battle in life or in a career. I have found that, during these times of seeming failure, I must increase my faith in the Lord and trust that He has made "ample provision"^{ccxvii}29 for His purposes to be brought to pass. This outcome requires a change from trusting in man to wholeheartedly trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith means trusting in God. Students in the BYU accounting program often will not get the grades that they are accustomed to getting and that they will need to if they are to get into the accounting master's program. This outcome often leads to an intense feeling of despair. Nearly everyone who ambitiously pursues excellence in life will meet significant opposition. I have learned that experiencing obstacles creates the opportunity to internalize the first principle of the gospel: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Prior to learning this, I understood faith to be a frame of mind similar to a positive mental attitude that was powerful enough to move mountains. This concept of faith led to despair during times of struggle as I wondered if my faith was nonexistent—let alone the size of a mustard seed. In contrast, I now equate faith with trust and have a better understanding that, if I do my best, I can trust that the *Lord* will take my life where

He wants it to go. The mountain will move when and if He wants it to move, assuming I do my part. Ultimately, where He takes my life will be where I want it to go, even though my finite wisdom often fails to realize that without hindsight. This understanding of faith started to become clear to me when I read the following from Elder Oaks: “The first principle of the gospel is not ‘faith.’ The first principle of the gospel is ‘Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ . . . Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a conviction and trust that God knows us and loves us and will hear our prayers and answer them with what is best for us. . . . In fact, God will do more than what is best for us. He will do what is best for us and for all of our Heavenly Father’s children. The conviction that the Lord knows more than we do and that he will answer our prayers in the way that is best for us and for all of his other children is a vital ingredient of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”^{ccxviii}30

Students who experience serious despair over their careers can benefit by trusting in the Lord’s wisdom. Elder Maxwell explained how trusting faith is developed through experiencing opposition: “Dissonance can mean discovery—new ways of knowing about ourselves that often would not occur without shaking up the status quo. For instance, in the matter of developing full faith, it may be as C. S. Lewis said: ‘You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong and sound as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice. Wouldn’t you then first discover how much you really trusted it?’ [A *Grief Observed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1961), 21]. No doubt this underlying need for testing and discovering is why some of our trials and experiences in life cannot be cut short.”^{ccxix}31

I believe that one of life’s main purposes is becoming converted to the extent that we have absolute, trusting faith in God and His plans. As faculty deepen their own conversions, students are likely to see how they themselves can become more converted.

Become more converted. Recently, Elder Oaks spoke of motives and identified a quartet of worldly motives. He said: “The treasures of our hearts—our priorities—should not be what the scriptures call ‘riches [and] the vain things of this world’ (Alma 39:14). The ‘vain things of [the] world’ include every combination of that worldly quartet of property, pride, prominence, and power. . . . We should be seeking the kind of treasures the scriptures promise the faithful: ‘great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures’ (D&C 89:19).”^{ccxx}32

Often, students need to realize that true happiness comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not through seeking the worldly quartet that Elder Oaks warned of—property, pride, prominence, or power. When students see teachers who are not concerned about this worldly quartet, including prominence in the classroom, those students will have their greatest likelihood of turning to Christ and being fully converted. In many respects, the spiritual challenges our students face are the same challenges faculty face. For example, employment in higher education is very competitive. I have found that observing the exceptional talents of my colleagues can either lead to inspiration or insecurity if I am not fully grounded in my faith. Faculty who have not learned to have trusting faith in the Lord and to strip pride from their lives will not be able to effectively lead students to apply gospel principles to their own challenges.

As teachers, we must be fully converted ourselves to lead our students to become more converted in all aspects of their lives. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that conversion is a lifelong process: “Being born again is a gradual thing. . . . We are born again by degrees, and we are born again to added light and added knowledge and added desires for righteousness as we keep the commandments.”^{ccxxi}33 This statement suggests that I must constantly be nurturing my own

conversion so I can progress to the point where I will be able to help bring my students to Christ. In doing so, I will be more likely to educate, not just for time but also for eternity.

Pride, Priestcrafts, and Proficiency

Throughout my educational process and as a teacher, I have had many opportunities to consider the role of education from an eternal perspective. In doing so, I have pondered the seemingly conflicting signals concerning learning and intelligence. For example, many verses in the Book of Mormon warn the learned and the rich against pride (see 2 Nephi 9:42; 28:15). Elsewhere, we are told that learning is good if we hearken to God’s counsel (see D&C 88:118; 2 Nephi 9:29). Thus, both wealth and education apparently can present great opportunities for us to serve and bless others; however, they also provide great spiritual risks to the receiver if pride develops. President Benson commented on these risks as follows: “The two groups who have the greatest difficulty in following the prophet are the proud who are learned and the proud who are rich. The learned may feel the prophet is only inspired when he agrees with them; otherwise, the prophet is just giving his opinion—speaking as a man. The rich may feel they have no need to take counsel of a lowly prophet.”^{ccxxii}34

Although the prophets have warned members about seeking after wealth,^{ccxxiii}35 they encourage Church members to continually seek as much education as possible. For example, President Hinckley counseled the youth of the Church to pursue their secular education as follows: “Get all the education you can. . . . Education is the key to opportunity. The Lord has placed upon you, as members of this Church, the obligation to study and to learn of things spiritual, yes, but of things temporal also. Acquire all of the education that you can, even if it means great sacrifice while you are young.”^{ccxxiv}36

We also know from the prophets that pride is associated with education. Nephi instructs the learned to “hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:29), thereby warning us that the human tendency is such that after getting a little education, we begin to think we know more than the Lord’s servants. To keep our education in perspective, we should recognize that even if we know all there is to know about our field of study, our knowledge is a far cry from God’s. On this note, Elder Hugh B. Brown encouraged BYU faculty to keep an open mind regarding both religious doctrine and secular knowledge; he said: While I believe all that God has revealed, I am not quite sure that I understand what he has revealed. The fact that he has promised further revelation is to me a challenge to keep an open mind and to be prepared to follow wherever my search for truth may lead. . . . We have been blessed with much knowledge by revelation from God. . . . But there is an incomprehensibly greater part of truth which we must yet discover. Our revealed truth should leave us stricken with the knowledge of how little we really know. It should never lead to an emotional arrogance based upon a false assumption that we somehow have all the answers—that we in fact have a corner on truth, for we do not. Whether you are in the field of economics or political science, history or the behavioral sciences, continue your search for truth. And maintain humility sufficient to be able to review your hypotheses as new truth comes to you by means of the spirit or the mind. Salvation, like education, is an ongoing process.^{ccxxv}37

I find it inspiring to hear a modern prophet humbly acknowledge his lack of omniscience regarding spiritual truth. This acknowledgment drives home to me how much I need to continually increase my own learning to fulfill my responsibilities and become what I can become.

Pray for pure motives. I believe that the worldly quartet spoken of by Elder Oaks, property, pride, prominence, and power, provides a clear measuring stick for impure motives. When I have impure motives in my teaching, I find that my ability to have charity and to teach with the Spirit evaporates. Of that worldly quartet, I suspect that the desire for prominence is more applicable to an occupation in teaching than it may be in many other occupations. Prominence is defined as “having a quality that thrusts itself into attention.” I personally have experienced the thrill of “being on stage.” When I feel this way, I fear I am guilty of priestcraft as discussed in the Book of Mormon: “He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (2 Nephi 26:29).

Elder Oaks explained how a motive, of either student or teacher, determines the degree to which the Spirit can teach. He said: “Motive is also important in our quest for knowledge and in the questioning that accompanies it. . . . Seeking and questioning can be a pathway to learning and service, or it can be a means of disruption and self-aggrandizement. The questions can be the same in both instances. The difference is in the questioners’ motives. One person can be seeking knowledge ‘with an eye single to eternal . . . values,’ while another person asking the same questions can be seeking nothing more than to sow discontent and to reap profit or prominence. . . . Participants in both types of seeking and questioning could frame their questions more precisely and evaluate responses more wisely if they were more aware of the nature and importance of their personal motives.”^{ccxxvi}38

Purifying our motivations is a lifelong pursuit. Making regular mental comparisons between our own knowledge and that of Heavenly Father helps us to avoid being content with what we have learned and to avoid pride in pursuing additional knowledge.

Seek proficiency, both secular and spiritual. While serving as the president of BYU, Elder Oaks explained the need for faculty to be proficient in both their discipline and in spiritual truth: “If any teacher at BYU has a doctorate in his or her discipline but only grade-school preparation in the gospel, that teacher needs some spiritual development. The reverse is also true: a doctorate-level knowledge of the gospel will not suffice if we are poorly prepared in our individual discipline.”^{ccxxvii}39

Similarly, President Kimball explained that BYU faculty will achieve the greatest accomplishments by combining academic expertise with spiritual excellence. He said: “BYU can tower above other universities . . . because of the unique light BYU can send forth into the educational world. . . . First among these unique features is the fact that education on this campus deliberately and persistently concerns itself with ‘education for eternity’ not just for time. The faculty have a double heritage which they must pass along: the secular knowledge . . . (and) also the vital and revealed truths that have been sent to us from heaven. . . . Your double heritage and dual concerns with the secular and the spiritual require you to be ‘bilingual.’ As LDS scholars, you must speak with authority and excellence to your professional colleagues in the language of scholarship, and you must also be literate in the language of spiritual things.”^{ccxxviii}40

I have found that being a teacher offers a unique career opportunity to worship God with all my heart, might, mind, and spirit in an attempt to prepare myself and my students for eternal life. I am grateful for this opportunity and hope I can magnify my responsibilities to serve out of pure love.

Notes

1. Neal A. Maxwell, "The Disciple-Scholar," in *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar*, ed. Henry B. Eyring (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 3.
2. Maxwell, "The Disciple-Scholar," 5. 3. Neal A. Maxwell, "Shine as Lights in the World," *Ensign*, May 1983, 10.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:24 states: "Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come." Given this definition, only eternal, unchangeable doctrine is truth.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, "Focus and Priorities," *Ensign*, May 2001, 84.
6. Maxwell, "The Disciple-Scholar," 6–7.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, "On Learning and Becoming," in *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar*, 92, 99, 101.
8. Ernest L. Wilkinson, "The Calling of BYU," in *Educating Zion*, ed. John W. Welch and Don E. Norton (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 38.
9. Henry B. Eyring, CES Fireside, 6 May 2001.
10. In John 8:12, the Savior calls Himself the Light of the World; in Matthew 5:14, He tells His followers: "Ye are the light of the world." In John 14:6, the Savior says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."
11. Both Elder Bruce R. McConkie and Doctrine and Covenants 19 teach that eternal life is God's life.
12. Karl Maeser, "History of the Academy," in *Educating Zion*, 2.
13. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1858), 5:124.
14. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:172.
15. Neal A. Maxwell, *That Ye May Believe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 40–41.
16. Gene R. Cook, *Searching the Scriptures: Bringing Power to Your Personal and Family Study* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 115.
17. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 100.
18. Neal A. Maxwell, *Brigham Young University 1991–92 Devotional Speeches and Firesides* (Provo, Utah: University Publications, 1992), 146.
19. *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999), 61–62.
20. Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 6.
21. Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989).
22. Dallin H. Oaks, "Sins and Mistakes," *Ensign*, October 1996, 67.
23. Hafen, *The Broken Heart*, 12.
24. Hafen, *The Broken Heart*, 151.
25. For example, BYU's School of Accountancy and Information Systems (SOAIS) is recognized as one of the top accounting programs nationally; as such, SOAIS graduates are highly recruited and have promising career opportunities. This situation has led to a significant demand to get into the SOAIS with the typical student being bright, highly motivated, and academically successful. Recent students admitted averaged a 3.7 BYU grade-point average, whereas those not admitted averaged over a 3.4!
26. Boyd K. Packer, "An Appeal to Prospective Elders," *Ensign*, May 1975, 105–6.
27. Steve Young, "Perception or Reality," *Exchange*, fall 1995, 14.

28. Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 4.
29. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 220.
30. Dallin H. Oaks, “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 98–99. 31. Neal A. Maxwell, *“A More Excellent Way” : Essays on Leadership for Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 129.
32. Oaks, “Focus and Priorities,” 84.
33. Mark L. McConkie, ed., *Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 53.
34. Ezra T. Benson, *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1981), 29.
35. See Spencer W. Kimball, “The False Gods We Worship,” *Ensign*, June 1976, 2–6, and Oaks, “Focus and Priorities,” 84.
36. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 172.
37. Hugh B. Brown, “An Eternal Quest—Freedom of the Mind,” in *Educating Zion*, 86–87.
38. Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 25–26.
39. Dallin H. Oaks, “A House of Faith,” in *Educating Zion*, 124–25.
40. Spencer W. Kimball, “Climbing the Hills Just Ahead,” in *Educating Zion*, 64.



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