



Our most important outcome as teachers is to inspire class members with spiritual power that will drive the gospel into their hearts and lives.

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Instruct, But More Importantly, Inspire

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What is the greatest outcome you hope for in the classroom? Is it to dazzle the students with brilliance and insight? Is it to have a fun-filled class with an abundance of humor and laughter? Do you hope to stir deep emotion, even evoking tears? How do you know when you have taught a good lesson? What measure do you use to determine the effectiveness of your class? More importantly, what is the greatest outcome of effective teaching?

President Gordon B. Hinckley delivered a marvelous talk to religious educators. He said, “And I thought of what a great challenge this is for you to teach in such a way as to *not only instruct but, more importantly, to inspire.*”¹

In that same setting, just moments earlier, Elder Henry B. Eyring taught: “And yet the troubles and the temptations our students faced just five years ago pale in comparison with what we see now, and even more difficult times are ahead. I have felt as many of you have felt that what we have done and are doing will not be enough. We need greater power to get the gospel down into the hearts and lives of our students.”²

According to our prophet and our former commissioner, the most important outcome in the classroom is to “inspire” with spiritual power that will drive “the gospel down into the hearts and lives of our students.” This outcome is vital because we are living in a time of great wickedness, with an evil mist that seems to be expanding and becoming increasingly dense, thick, and dark. Therefore, it is imperative that our students have frequent opportunities to be edified by the light and

truth of the gospel. As one of my friends stated, “As Satan continues to get in our face with increasing intensity, we must in turn face him with greater spiritual power.”

When students are taught with spiritual power, their souls are lifted, their faith is fortified, and their confidence waxes strong to meet life’s challenges. Moreover, when taught with power, students feel an increased desire and motivation “to forsake sin and to come unto Christ, call on His name, obey His commandments, and abide in His love.”³ In essence, our students become converted.

In emphasizing the principle that students want to be taught with spiritual power and clarity, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. says, “The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted.”⁴ Additionally, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explains, “Most people don’t come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven.”⁵

What, then, are things we can do to teach with greater inspiration and thereby lead students to deeper conversion?⁶ How can we be stronger instruments in fortifying faith and renewing hope? What more can be done to create a climate that invites the Spirit to inspire? The answers to these questions are found in the scriptures and in the words of modern-day prophets and apostles. These answers include the essential prerequisites of (a) purifying our hearts, (b) receiving the power of God within us, and (c) exercising the power of faith.

Purifying Our Hearts: Motives, Methods, and Outcomes

Ezra 7:10 states, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” Before Ezra taught, he prepared his heart by seeking the law or the will of the Lord and then doing it. Likewise, a key to teaching by the Spirit also begins with preparing our hearts through purifying our attitudes and intents and by seeking the Lord’s will and doing it. To teach by the “Spirit of truth,” we must ensure that our hearts, including our motives, are pure because if they are not, we will teach by “some other way” (D&C 50:17).⁷ The following table⁸ includes some of the motives of those who teach “by the Spirit of truth,” compared to those who teach by “some other way” (D&C 50:17).

By the Spirit of truth	By some other way
<p>The motive:</p> <p><i>According to D&C 4:5:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Eye single to the glory of God” <p><i>According to 1 Timothy 1:5:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Charity out of a pure heart . . . and of faith unfeigned” <p><i>According to Alma 29:9:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “That perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God” <p><i>And according to Moroni 10:3-5:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ” 	<p>The motive:⁹</p> <p><i>According to 2 Nephi 26:29-31:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Set themselves up for a light” • “That they may get gain” • “And praise of the world” • “They seek not the welfare of Zion” <p><i>And according to D&C 121:35-36:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hearts are set so much upon the things of this world” • “Aspire to the honors of men” • “To cover our sins” • “To gratify” our pride • To gratify “our vain ambition” • “To exercise control or dominion”

I watched firsthand a teacher transform from someone who was a skilled instructor to a teacher who, in addition, inspired his students by changing his motive for teaching. His heart had changed from teaching to receive the “praise of evaluators” to teaching to reflect an “eye single to the glory of God.” One day I asked him what brought about this wonderful change. He said, “I simply started to focus on loving my students and helping them, rather than on myself.” He explained, “When people walk in [to observe and evaluate], it sincerely makes no difference; my motive has changed from myself [trying to impress and “aspire to the honors of men”] to serving the students.” This change in his mind and heart brought about great changes in the spiritual outcomes in his classroom. These outcomes included an increase in “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22) that enabled him to inspire students to share more freely and abundantly their feelings, experiences, and testimonies regarding the Savior, the gospel, the scriptures, and the principles being taught, as well as to express their commitment to act on what they had learned and felt.

Sometimes the needed change of heart isn’t limited only to purifying our motives. The needed change can include being cleansed and relieved from bitterness, anger, and apathy; exhibiting forgiveness; avoiding jealousy; and overcoming other sinful feelings. At times, we might need to experience a “mighty change of heart,” which is preceded by experiencing a mighty broken heart. Then, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, we can receive the Lord’s help and be cleansed and purified from whatever is ailing our heart.

The next table illustrates some methods used to teach “by the Spirit of truth” compared to methods done by “some other way.” Note that the motives in the teacher’s heart largely determine the methods the teacher will use in the classroom.

By the Spirit of truth	By some other way
The method:	The method:
1. Mildness, meekness, and humility (D&C 12:8; 19:30; 38:41; Galatians 5:22-23)	1. Railing accusation, sarcasm, “put-downs,” and arrogance (D&C 50:33)
2. Focus on the scriptures and the words of the living prophets (D&C 52:9)	2. The use of uninspiring sources or methods (1 Timothy 1:3-4)
3. Use boldness, but not overbearance (Alma 38:12)	3. Soft-pedaling, misdirected zeal or enthusiasm, self-righteousness (Jacob 4:18; Matthew 23)
4. Humor (D&C 123:17, 59:15). Heber C. Kimball taught, “I am perfectly satisfied that my Father and my God is a cheerful, pleasant, lively, and good-natured Being. . . . He is a jovial, lively person, and a beautiful man.” ¹⁰	4. Light-mindedness (88:69, 121), sharing that which is frivolous and inappropriate. We should avoid “seeking after the vain and foolish things which amuse and entertain the world,” declared President Joseph Fielding Smith. ¹¹
5. Rejoice and thanksgiving (D&C 50:22; 136:28)	5. Entertainment (for its sake alone). <i>In Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook</i> , we read, “Sometimes teachers, in an attempt to entertain students or hold their interest, choose methods or use techniques that are not in harmony with the principles of edification.” ¹²
6. Testifying (D&C 18:36)	6. Boasting (D&C 50:33; Alma 26:11-12; 38:11)
7. Feelings of the heart (TG: Heart). Elder Parley P. Pratt said, “The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use.” ¹³	7. Emotionalism. President Howard W. Hunter cautioned, “Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, but that outward manifestation ought not to be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself.” ¹⁴
8. “Let us reason together” (D&C 50:10-12)	8. Intellectualism (2 Timothy 3:7; 2 Nephi 9:28, 42; 26:20) ¹⁵
9. Doctrines and principles of the kingdom (D&C 52:9, 36; 88:77)	9. Philosophies of men (JS-H 1:19; Colossians 2:22; D&C 3:6, 45:29)
Likening all scriptures unto us (1 Nephi 19:23)¹⁶	Speculation (Jacob 4:14)
10. Persuasion (D&C 121:41)	10. Control, force, and compulsion (D&C 121:37)

11. By small and simple means (Alma 37:6-7). Elder Eyring counseled, “Do the simple thing. Teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ, simply, clearly from the Book of Mormon.” ¹⁷	11. Complexity. Elder Robert L. Simpson stated, “As we complicate our lives, we discourage the gifts of the Spirit.” ¹⁸
12. The still, small voice. Edification and enlightenment (3 Nephi 11:3; D&C 8:2-3; 50:22; 85:6)	12. “Hype.” We live in a “hyped-up” world. Television. Emphasis on the extreme, sensation, and shock. Must be intense, “high adventure,” etc.
13. Teach the truth and righteousness (D&C 50:9-25). Truth is emphasized (especially vv. 14, 17, 19, 21)	13. Explicit descriptions of evil. Sometimes we inadvertently teach what we do not intend nor want to teach. Speak of evil, but rarely describe it in detail (see 2 Timothy 3)
14. Encouragement and exhortation (D&C 20:42, 46-47, 50, 59; 50:37)	14. Flattery and an appeal to vanity (see Index, “Flattery”)
15. That when all have spoken that all may be edified of all (D&C 88:122)	15. Fruitless discussions or “vain jangling” (1 Timothy 1:6c)

I observed a teacher use basketball as the base method of his lesson. He divided his class into two teams, boys against the girls. Next, the students read a certain number of verses and then closed their scriptures and answered questions about the verses. The first person from either side who knew the answer to the question got to shoot the basketball from a number of different places, earning points with each successive basket. What happened next can be described by the following words: *war, heated competition, put-downs, accusations of cheating, sarcasm, shouting*, and, ultimately, *chaos*. As the time passed, the contention escalated as the boys continued to gloat in their dominance.

After the class was finally over, a frustrated and somewhat exasperated teacher realized the method he had chosen was largely based on entertainment and had no spiritually strengthening effect on his students whatsoever. He vowed he would never use another method that would displace the scriptures as the basis of the lesson or that would drive the Spirit away.

Teaching by the Spirit of truth—outcomes. In Doctrine and Covenants 50:22, the Lord revealed the outcomes of teaching by the “Spirit of truth.” He said, “Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, *understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together*” (emphasis added). Understanding, edification, and rejoicing are scriptural descriptions and the outcomes of being taught with power. More specifically, as students are taught with power, they more clearly understand the principles being taught, they are edified and

inspired to act on what they have learned, and they feel an increase of love and gratitude for the Lord, His gospel, the scriptures, and one another. As students experience these outcomes, they will be more converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Elder Eyring gave counsel to the “preacher” on how to have an edifying experience in the classroom: “Our aim must be for [our students] to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us. . . . What we seek for our students is that change. We must be humble about our part in it. True conversion depends on a student seeking freely in faith, with great effort and some pain. Then it is the Lord who can grant, in His time, the miracle of cleansing and change.”¹⁹

Elder Eyring taught that not all of our students will experience conversion while they are with us, but he did say that “we can play a vital part” for all of them.²⁰ Elder Eyring further added that our role as teachers is to allow the Holy Ghost to confirm truths when they are taught: “We are teachers whose charge is to place those words so that when the student chooses and pleads, the Holy Ghost can confirm them in the heart and the miracle can begin.”²¹

Our students must understand that they play a role as the “hearer” and have a responsibility as the “receiver” of the word so edification can transpire. Once students have heard and received the word, they too can become “spokesmen” by sharing and testifying of what they know and feel is true so that “all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:122). As students are interested and engaged in the process of hearing, receiving, and testifying, the spiritual outcomes during the lesson are greatly enhanced.

While serving as president of BYU–Idaho, Elder David A. Bednar explained that students invite the Spirit into their minds and hearts through their actions. Speaking at his last devotional, Elder Bednar asked all the students present to hold their scriptures in the air. Elder Bednar then explained the reason he had encouraged all the students to bring their scriptures to each devotional—by so doing, each student was extending an invitation to the Spirit to be taught by revelation.²² Emphasizing another way students can play a role in inviting the Spirit into the classroom, Elder Scott taught, “When you encourage students to . . . respond to a question, they signify to the Holy Ghost their willingness to learn.”²³ In addition, there are many other ways such as singing hymns, participating in discussions, staying focused, pondering the word, sharing testimony and experiences about the doctrine, and many more, that the students can do to invite the Spirit to teach them

with power so that “he that preacheth and *he that receiveth*, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22; emphasis added). As students understand and apply these principles, the spiritual outcomes are substantially increased during the lesson. Thus, if students want to be taught in the light, they must first be striving to stand in the light.

Teaching by some other way—outcomes. “Teaching by some other way” produces outcomes that are uninspiring, nonnourishing, unsubstantial, and nonsustaining. Elder Scott cautioned, “There is no place in your teaching for gimmicks, fads, or bribery by favors or treats. Such activities *produce no lasting motivation for personal growth nor any enduring beneficial results*. Simply stated, truths presented in an environment of true love and trust qualify for the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit.”²⁴

One afternoon in an inservice meeting, several teachers voiced their feelings regarding teaching by the “Spirit of truth” or teaching “by some other way.” One teacher commented that when he teaches “by some other way,” he feels like he is performing and also feels that his lessons are cheap, shallow, and superficial. Another teacher remarked that when teaching “by some other way,” he knew he was relying on his own strength (primarily his personality) rather than on the Lord’s strength and power. When teachers teach by the “Spirit of truth,” they can immediately feel it and recognize it and will have a desire to change their motives and methods so they have edifying outcomes.

In speaking of the power that comes into our teaching as we purify our hearts, Elder Carlos E. Asay taught, “A pure doctrine taught by a pure man or woman with pure motive will result in a pure testimony.”²⁵ Along with having pure hearts, if we want to instruct and inspire, we must also receive the power of God within us.

Receiving the Power of God within Us

In the Book of Mormon, as well as in other scriptures, we find remarkable examples of teachers who were filled with spiritual power and subsequently taught with inspiration. Simply stated, if we also receive the power of God within us, then we can teach with inspiration.

Nephi and Lehi are prime examples of those who received the power within and then subsequently taught with great power: “And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did preach unto the Lamanites with such great power and authority, for they had power and authority given unto them that they might speak, and they also had what they should speak given unto them” (Helaman 5:18). Further, the record

reads, “And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did *enter into their hearts*, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words” (Helaman 5:45; emphasis added). And as a result of being taught with power, many were confounded, and then they confessed and were baptized “and immediately returned to the Nephites to endeavor to repair unto them the wrongs which they had done” (Helaman 5:17). Even others were convinced (Helaman 5:50) and brought “into the depths of humility to be the humble followers of God and the Lamb” (Helaman 6:5).

Other scriptural examples also show the results of those who received the power of God within and then subsequently taught with this amazing power. Alma, after bearing a powerful testimony about Jesus Christ and the Atonement, said that “this is the testimony which is in me” (Alma 7:13; emphasis added). Similarly, as was stated of Ether, “Ether was a prophet of the Lord . . . and began to prophesy unto the people, for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him” (Ether 12:2; emphasis added). Further, Jeremiah vowed to close his mouth and to preach no longer about Jehovah, but he could not because “his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9; emphasis added). These men had the power of God in them, consuming their very bones; and, as a result, they were able to teach with inspiration. Although all the cited men were ancient prophets who held priesthood keys, the principles of preparation that were used by them can be emulated by any teacher in the Church today. Hence, to be able to teach with this kind of power requires a type of preparation that runs deeper than just going through the motions—it descends beneath superficiality, pretentiousness, and hypocrisy, and the power of the Holy Ghost penetrates the shell of the inspiring teacher and sinks to his or her very core.

In the chart below are examples of teachers who demonstrated the method used to invite and receive this power as well as the outcomes that occurred in the minds and hearts of the listeners.

From the scriptures, we see people receiving power of God through remembering, exercising faith, living righteously, being humble, studying the scriptures, fasting, praying, attending the temple,²⁶ and being strictly obedient. Thus, if we want to teach with power, we must first receive the power. Receiving the power of God within us does not come inexpensively; it requires us to pay the price in personal preparation. And at some point, after we have demonstrated our intent and have qualified ourselves, the Lord, based on His criteria,

Scripture example	Method/Power source	Outcomes in people
<p>King Benjamin (Omni 1:25; Words of Mormon 1:17; Mosiah 2; 5:2-4)</p>	<p>“Knowing king Benjamin to be a <i>just man</i> before the Lord” (Omni 1:25; emphasis added)</p> <p>“For behold, king Benjamin was a <i>holy man</i>, and he did reign over his people in <i>righteousness</i>; and there were many <i>holy men</i> in the land, and they did speak the word of God <i>with power and with authority</i>” (Words of Mormon 1:17; emphasis added).</p> <p>Humility (Mosiah 2:10-11)</p>	<p>“Because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a <i>mighty change . . . in our hearts, . . . we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.</i></p> <p>“And we . . . have <i>great views</i> of that which is to come; and were it expedient, <i>we could prophesy</i> of all things.</p> <p>“And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has <i>brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy</i>” (Mosiah 5:2-4; emphasis added).</p>
<p>Alma and the four sons of Mosiah (Alma 17:2-4; Alma 23:5; Alma 26:13)</p>	<p>“They had waxed strong in the <i>knowledge of the truth</i>; for they were men of a <i>sound understanding</i> and they had <i>searched the scriptures diligently</i>. . . They had given themselves to <i>much prayer, and fasting</i>; . . . and when they taught, <i>they taught with power and authority</i>” (Alma 17:2-3; emphasis added).</p> <p>“They are brought to sing redeeming love . . . because of the <i>power of his word</i> which is in us” (Alma 26:13; emphasis added)</p>	<p>“By the power of their words many <i>were brought before the altar of God, to call on his name and confess their sins before him</i>” (Alma 17:4).</p> <p>“And thousands were brought to the <i>knowledge of the Lord</i>” (Alma 23:5; emphasis added).</p> <p>“Thousands [have been] <i>loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love</i>” (Alma 26:13; emphasis added).</p>

will bless us with His Spirit. As we study the scriptures with a sincere desire and real intent, we feel the power of the word of God by hearing and feeling the “voice” of the Lord (see D&C 18:34–36). Then, we know we have received the Lord’s message for His children, and

we can enter our classroom filled with faith that they too can hear and feel His voice. This is when we know we are ready not only to instruct but also to inspire.

Elder Paul V. Johnson, administrator of Religious Education, states, “I really believe living the gospel is *the single most important thing you can do to improve your teaching*. It makes it possible to have the Spirit with you in your life as you prepare and teach your lessons and as you interact with your students. There is no substitute for the Spirit.”²⁷

Likewise, President Boyd K. Packer says, “Power comes when a teacher has done all that he can to prepare, not just the individual lesson, but in keeping his life in tune with the Spirit. If he will learn to rely on the Spirit for inspiration, he can go before his class . . . secure in the knowledge that he can teach with inspiration.”²⁸

Students recognize and appreciate teachers who have paid the price in preparation and have obtained the power within to teach with inspiration. Here are some students’ comments that were written about their teacher:

“She had wonderful teaching [techniques] and object lessons. Her lessons were packed with the Spirit, and I always left uplifted and happy.”

“[She] was always prepared. I felt the Spirit when she taught.”

“She has a great testimony and she knows the scriptures very well. She is helping me understand the scriptures.”

“Very nice, spiritual, encouraging, makes class fun.”

“Funny, taught us a lot. Fun to be around. Has a very strong testimony of our Heavenly Father.”

“I could tell she put a lot of effort into her lessons. She brought the Spirit when she taught. I like how she bore her testimony to us.”

Finally, the great Exemplar, Jesus Christ, stated: “And *for their sakes* I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19; emphasis added). The Lord applied this same principle to us when He said: “And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken” (D&C 43:16).

The Power of Faith

Exercising faith is absolutely necessary in when we are accessing spiritual power.²⁹ In *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook*, we read the following about faith: “It is a principle of power in religious education as well, and teachers will not succeed without it.”³⁰

To teach with inspiration, we must have faith in the Lord Jesus

Christ. Mormon taught, “And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33). This promise extends to those who face the challenge of teaching the youth, young adults, and adults the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Spirit.

The role that faith plays in teaching cannot be overstated; it has a profound influence on preparation, presentation, our expectations, and our connections with students. Fear is the antithesis of faith; it is an emotion manipulated by the adversary to dilute or eliminate the power of God in our lives. When fear displaces or even minimizes faith, the spiritual outcomes in the classroom are diminished or, even worse, eliminated. The adversary uses other forms of fear that include despondency, discouragement, despair, and depression that can also displace faith. If permitted, fear can affect our decisions during preparation, confine us during presentation, minimize our expectations, and strangulate our relationships with our students. These negative effects create an impetus leading toward uninspiring teaching. The Lord counsels us, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36). Thoughts of fear, like any other restrictive thoughts, can be driven from the mind and replaced with powerful, facilitating thoughts of faith. In addition to having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and overcoming fear, when we exercise faith in the word of God, offer prayers of faith, and have faith in our students, we teach with greater spiritual power than when we do not practice these behaviors.

Exercising faith in the word of God. Exercising faith during preparation empowers us to feast on the words of Christ, certain the Lord will show us through the Spirit what to teach and how to teach it (2 Nephi 32:3, 5). Thus, the promise that “when a [teacher] speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1). Preparing with faith also ensures we will not shrink during our preparation time into doing easier things like skimming the Word, deciding to wing the “how,” resorting to a “canned” lesson that may or may not have the power to sustain students of our day, or merely looking for something to “kill some time.” Even preparing the fringe, the sensational, or the spectacular just to “hold them” can be the product of fear. Indeed, the temptation might be to “fry some froth,” quickly preparing lessons with little or no spiritual nutritional value whatsoever. We must guard against substituting the word of God, which is more powerful than anything else, for that which is nonnourishing or unsubstantial.³¹ Another example of this behavior is to overemphasize the use of methods that could

distract from, or even eclipse, the word of God, all because of the teacher's fear that the scriptures won't hold the students or that they won't like a scripture-based lesson. In *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook*, we read, "Satan would have teachers believe that students will not like studying the scriptures, or that one cannot teach the scriptures day after day and be successful. But the power of the Lord's word is sure."³²

On the other hand, fear can also lead to overpreparation—to prepare so much and so long that it becomes counter-productive. Similarly, a time will come when the fear must be replaced with faith when we recognize that after we have paid the price, the Lord will compensate for our deficiencies. In speaking on preparation, Elder Holland testifies, "Then, if our hearts are right, if we are as clean as we can be, if we have prayed and wept and prepared and worried until we don't know what more we can do, God can say to us as He did to Alma and the sons of Mosiah: 'Lift up thy head and rejoice. . . . I will give unto you success'" (Alma 8:15; 26:27).³³

Offering prayers of faith. Part of preparing with faith includes offering the prayer of faith. Regarding this aspect of faith, Elder Eyring teaches:

You must have the Spirit as your constant companion to teach with power, and your students will not survive spiritually without the Spirit as their companion. We and they will qualify for the power we require in the same way. It takes prayer offered in faith and it takes obedience to the commandments of God. For some of us it may take more prayer, but for all of us it will take more faith. We need to have unshaken confidence that the Spirit will come to attend us. So do our students. We need to pray with confidence that the Spirit will guide us in our teaching and in our lives. Part of that faith is our determination, as we plead for the Spirit, that we will obey its directions.

Once the Lord knows our faith is sufficient that He can be certain we will obey, He will send the Spirit to teach us more clearly and more frequently. The prayer of faith always includes a commitment to obey. Our obedience, in time, will bring, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the change in our natures that we need to find peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. He wants that for us and for our students.³⁴

I know of a teacher who has a sign posted next to his office door that reads, "Never Again," which to him means he will never teach a lesson again without first offering a prayer of faith. Another teacher observed that her lessons are only as powerful as the prayers she offers before teaching her classes.

A prayer of faith is best offered at the beginning of preparation and

again at the beginning of presentation. It can include asking for the gift of discernment to understand the needs of the students and to see the relevancy, the applicability, or the “Therefore, what?” of the lesson for them. A prayer of faith could also include a request to receive the gift of charity—to feel the love of our Savior for all students, no matter how difficult it might be to like or love them and to request that they, too, might also feel and recognize this love. Additionally, a teacher could ask that the students will not only understand the principles but also will feel the importance of them in their hearts in a way that strengthens them against the adversary. A prayer of faith might even include a righteous request for grace, the enabling power of the Atonement, to strengthen us beyond our own ability. We could make numerous other humble requests as we offer the prayer of faith, remembering the Lord’s promise, “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you” (Moroni 7:26).

Having faith in students. Having faith in our students will lead to higher expectations and stronger connections with them than if we don’t have faith in them. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. delivered inspired and poignant remarks about students. He says:

The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. . . .

These students crave the faith their fathers and mothers have; they want it in its simplicity and purity. . . .

You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in his ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with him. You do not need to disguise religious truths with a cloak of worldly things; you can bring these truths to him openly.³⁵

If teachers truly believe these statements and if they really have faith in their students, the way they teach will be profoundly affected. For example, one of the most powerful ways to invite the Spirit into the classroom is to encourage students to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the doctrines and principles being taught. However, such experiences occur only as the teacher believes and has faith that students are willing, eager, and capable to explain and testify of the truths of the restored gospel. And when students are given these opportunities, if they feel safe, they will share personal, real, meaningful thoughts and feelings.

Conclusion

Thus, if the greatest outcome of teaching a class is inspiration, then the measure of a good lesson isn't necessarily in the number of elicited laughs, the number of tears shed, or the amount of information we have imparted. Neither is it found in the amount of praise we receive afterwards. They might be part of the outcome, but the greatest measure on whether a lesson has been helpful is the presence of the Holy Ghost. If we have felt the power of the Holy Ghost, then we can know the will of the Lord has been accomplished. And even if a single person doesn't come up afterward to offer praise, we can still know that we have been instruments in the hands of God. Further, we can know that if our students have also prepared, they too have been inspired to more fully understand and live the principles and doctrines of the gospel.

Hence, the great challenge to “not only instruct, but more importantly, to inspire,” identified by President Hinckley, ought to be the desire and motive of every teacher in the Church. Through inspirational teaching, students are awakened to and affirmed in their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Simply stated, teaching with inspiration is more important than engaging entertainment, more important than intellectual stimulation, and more important than emotional manifestation. It is the Spirit that opens the mind to understand truth and that touches the heart to feel the desire to act on truth—thus leading to deep conversion. Inspiring teaching is possible only through purifying our hearts, filling our souls with God's power, and exercising faith—all of which invite the Spirit. **RE**

Notes

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, *A Challenging Time—A Wonderful Time*, An Evening with President Gordon B. Hinckley, February 7, 2003, 1; emphasis added.

2. Henry B. Eyring, *The Spirit Must Be Our Constant Companion*, remarks at An Evening with President Gordon B. Hinckley, February 7, 2003, 1.

3. *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999), 5.

4. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1994), 3.

5. Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, April 1998, 32.

6. This is the very purpose for which the teaching emphasis was designed. It was developed to help bring about personal conversion. It would be erroneous to think the emphasis could be reduced to group work, pair and share, or a checklist. It is not. It is to identify principles that, when appropriately applied in

the classroom, will invite and lead to conversion, as well as to the assessment of conversion. “By implementing the following emphases and adjustments, CES will more directly prepare young people for effective missionary service, to receive the ordinances of the temple, and to emulate and teach gospel principles throughout their lives. This will also help deepen their faith, testimony, and conversion” (*A Current Teaching Emphasis for the Church Educational System* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 1).

7. Joseph Smith taught, “It is in vain to try to hide a bad spirit from the eyes of them who are spiritual, for it will show itself in speaking and in writing, as well as in all our other conduct. It is also needless to make great pretensions when the heart is not right; the Lord will expose it to the view of His faithful Saints” (*History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957], 1:317).

8. Special appreciation to Tom Tyler for initially compiling most of the information contained in the tables and to Joel Judd for bringing it to my attention. Used with permission.

9. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught, “Perhaps none of us serves in every capacity all the time for only a single reason. Since we are imperfect beings, most of us probably serve for a combination of reasons. These combinations may be different from time to time as we grow spiritually. But we should all strive to serve for the reasons that are highest and best.” Elder Oaks then lists six reasons for service, presented in ascending order from the lesser to the greater. The motives are (1) earthly reward, (2) good companionship, (3) fear of punishment, (4) duty or loyalty, (5) hope of reward, and (6) charity (see *Pure in Heart* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 39–49).

10. Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:222.

11. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, October 1916, 70.

12. *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint, 2001), 23.

13. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology: A Voice of Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 61.

14. Howard W. Hunter, *Eternal Investments*, An Evening with President Howard W. Hunter, February 10, 1989, 3.

15. After observing a well-educated university professor who was using his knowledge to impress a Sunday School class, Elder Richard G. Scott recorded in his journal, “Teach and testify to instruct, edify, and lead others to full obedience, not to demonstrate anything of self. All who are puffed up shall be cut off” (*Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led*, address to religious educators at a symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history, BYU, August 11, 1998, 11).

16. One way to “liken the scriptures” is to ask application questions. In speaking on this, Elder Henry B. Eyring taught: “But some questions invite inspiration. Great teachers ask those. That may take a small change of words, an inflection in the voice. Here is a question that might not invite inspiration: ‘How is a true prophet recognized?’

“But we could ask the question this way, with just a small difference: ‘When have you felt that you were in the presence of a prophet?’ That will invite individuals to search their memories for feelings. After asking, we might wisely wait for a moment before calling on someone to respond. Even those who do not speak will be thinking of spiritual experiences. That will invite the Holy Ghost” (*The Lord*

Will Multiply the Harvest, An Evening with Elder Henry B. Eyring, February 6, 1998, 6).

17. Henry B. Eyring, *We Must Raise Our Sights*, address to religious educators at a conference on the Book of Mormon, August 14, 2001), 6.

18. Robert L. Simpson, "Do It," *New Era*, August 1977, 33.

19. Eyring, *We Must Raise Our Sights*, 2, 4.

20. Eyring, *We Must Raise Our Sights*, 4.

21. Eyring, *We Must Raise Our Sights*, 4.

22. "New Apostle Addresses BYU—Idaho Students," *Church News*, November 20, 2004, 3. "By way of tradition, BYU—Idaho students hold their scriptures in the air at weekly devotional assemblies to show they are ready to be taught the word of God. Elder Bednar explained the reason behind the outward symbol of inward preparation that he began seven years ago upon his arrival as the fourteenth president of the university.

"Elder Bednar stated, 'I choked with emotion as I watched you hold up your scriptures today. You may wonder, "Why does Elder Bednar always have us raise our scriptures?" The answer is simple. Our study and use of the scriptures is an invitation to receive revelation and be tutored by the Holy Ghost.'"

23. Scott, *Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led*, 3.

24. Scott, *Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led*, 3; emphasis added.

25. Carlos E. Asay, *In the Lord's Service* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 22.

26. See D&C 109:13, 22, 38 for the promises of power to those who enter the temple.

27. Paul V. Johnson, CES address to new hires, May 15, 2002; emphasis added.

28. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 72.

29. See Joseph Smith, comp., *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 8–9.

30. *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook*, 18.

31. The word of God has a more powerful effect upon the mind "than the sword, or anything else" (Alma 31:5). The word of God "healeth the wounded soul" (Jacob 2:8) and "will tell you all things what ye should do" and show how to do them (2 Nephi 32:3). The scriptures contain the power to shield us from the fiery darts of the adversary (see 1 Nephi 15:24) and to help us become "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:17). According to President Boyd K. Packer, the scriptures provide immunization against the "perilous times" of the last days (see *Teach the Scriptures* [address to religious educators, October 14, 1977], 5).

32. *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook*, 19; emphasis added.

33. Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, April 1998, 32.

34. Eyring, *The Spirit Must Be Our Constant Companion*, 1.

35. Clark, *The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, 3, 9.