

accept calls to be nursery leaders, Cub Scout den mothers, early-morning seminary teachers, Scoutmasters, or other exceedingly time-consuming but sometimes low-profile callings in the Church will surely be the examples of what true consecration is all about.

In the long run, offering ourselves for sacred uses might simply be shown through a consistent attitude of meek willingness to offer all we are capable of giving at any given time while we help those about us do the same. Consecration seems to be a day-to-day process of dedication, humility, refinement, and purification as we follow the example of the most consecrated person of all time—our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

### Notes

1. *The LDS Speaker's Sourcebook* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1991), 76.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, "Obedience, Consecration, and Sacrifice," *Ensign*, May 1975, 50.
3. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. "consecrate" and "consecration."
4. Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:313, s.v. "consecration." See also D&C 82:19; 64:34; 88:67–68; 98:12–14.
5. Neal A. Maxwell, "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," *Ensign*, November 1995, 24.
6. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 135.

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## Personal Revelation and the Process of Conversion

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While I was working on a missionary preparation committee, Elder M. Russell Ballard made available some statistical research the Missionary Department had collected on conversions. The results of the three thousand interviews were fascinating. Although some marvelous things were going on in the Church missionary program, there were some rather sobering trends as well. For example, in the United States and Canada, only one in three eligible young men was accepting a mission call. As a result, conversions had flattened out. In 1999, there were only eighteen hundred more conversions than in 1995, even though ten thousand more missionaries were in the mission field. Those are sobering figures.

As we discussed those statistics, we acknowledged that while they were of great concern to the Missionary Department, the implications should also be a concern for the Church Educational System (CES). Outside of a full-time missionary program, personnel associated with CES spend more time with the youth of the Church than any other agency—about seven hundred hours for each student if we take into account four years of seminary and two years of institute. Because of my administrative responsibilities, I interviewed 624 missionaries and had a chance to work with many of them. Among the questions I always asked are the following: Were you in seminary? Were you in institute? What was your teacher's name? What kind of experience did you have in the program?

As a result of these interviews, I feel I know a great deal about seminary and institute teachers. Overall, the responses from students were very positive. I rarely heard about negative experiences in seminary and institute. That is the good news. The bad news is that the CES programs are rarely pivotal. They are positive but not pivotal. One of the questions we like to ask is "What inspired you to accept a mission call?" Family was the primary motivator. I only

occasionally heard, “It was my institute teacher or my seminary teacher who really turned me around.”

Another alarming fact is that many missionaries, maybe even the majority of them, have a very shallow understanding of the gospel. They know the doctrines superficially, but as soon as someone starts asking them questions, they are in over their heads.

This summer, Stewart Glazier and I had the privilege of taking Elder Ballard and his extended family along with Larry H. Miller and his family on the Mormon Pioneer Trail in Wyoming to express our gratitude for their help with the Pioneer Trails Workshop (CES summer in-service experience). At Martin’s Cove, Elder Ballard spoke to the whole group. He gave me permission to share his words. He said that President Gordon B. Hinckley had recently expressed concern that some Church members have mental but not spiritual conversion. The gospel appeals to them, but real conversion is when they feel something in their hearts and not just in their minds. President Hinckley went on to say, “There is mental assent but not spiritual conviction.”

Unfortunately, many missionaries reach mental assent but not spiritual conviction. Elder Ballard further quoted President Hinckley as saying, “The power and deep conversion of the Spirit is needed by our members to get into their hearts to confirm what they agreed to in their minds. This then will carry them through every storm and adversity, just as it did the pioneers.” In accordance with President Hinckley’s statements, Elder Ballard made this comment: “The great task, the great challenge of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles is to get the spirit of the gospel from people’s minds into their hearts to where they have spiritual experiences. And the spiritual experiences are enough that they change feelings. They change our view of life.”<sup>xiv</sup> 1

In the research earlier mentioned, the three thousand people interviewed were divided into three groups: (1) people who had listened to the missionaries but never joined the Church, (2) people who had joined the Church but were no longer active, and (3) people who had joined the Church and remained active. Though the views were expressed in many ways, the researchers found two primary factors required for those who remained active.

The first of those factors is a willingness to “experiment on the word” (see Alma 32:27). When missionaries ask investigators, “Will you read the Book of Mormon and pray about it? Will you come to Church with us? Will you stop smoking? and Will you pay tithing?” they are asking investigators to experiment on the word.

The second factor is to have confirming experiences that occur after searchers for truth have experimented on the word. When investigators say such things as “I felt something when I read the Book of Mormon,” “I felt like I got an answer to my prayers,” and “I really had a wonderful feeling while I was in your Sunday meetings,” they are expressing outcomes of experimenting on the word. That is the key to conversion—not just for investigators but for everyone. As stated in Alma 32, if we are not willing to give place in our hearts for the word or are not willing to awake and arouse our faculties, then the seed of faith will not grow. We will never be truly converted. If a person says, “Well, I really don’t believe in prayer, so I don’t think I’ll pray about the Book of Mormon,” there is not much anyone can do to further the conversion process.

So teachers must teach students about those two factors: (1) a willingness to experiment on the word and (2) an understanding of the confirming experiences that come from experimenting on the word. In addition to those two factors, teachers should be aware of another contributing factor. When a person has a friend, relative, or associate who is a positive example of a faithful member of the Church, such individuals often profoundly affect true conversion. Of all the investigators interviewed in the above-mentioned study, 44 percent had a close friend, relative, or associate who was a member of the Church. In the case of those who refused to continue and

were never baptized, only 38 percent had a friend or relative who was a member. Of those who were baptized and remained active in the Church, 86 percent had a faithful friend or relative. Investigators said such things as, “I loved the missionaries, but I was having problems in my marriage and I didn’t feel comfortable going to a nineteen-year-old, so I went to my dear neighbor who was a Latter-day Saint,” or “I feel very uncomfortable going to Church in a new setting. While the missionaries were wonderful, it was my sister-in-law who took us and introduced us to people.”

How can we accomplish desired conversion outcomes? In practical terms, what can we do as CES teachers to help bring about the conversion process? We have to do something more than we are now doing to change CES from just a positive experience to a pivotal experience in the lives of our students. Many students come from homes where there is no conversion. Frankly, more and more of our students are coming from homes where the parents are only mentally converted.

Teachers must remember that they neither convert listeners nor give spiritual experiences to listeners. The First Presidency has said that we should help others receive their own spiritual experiences that change hearts and thereby change views of life. There are five practical ways to become an instrument in the Lord’s hands to aid in conversion.

### **1. Understand that teachers have to “want it.”**

Teachers should have a passionate desire to teach. Two scriptures define our position as teachers of the gospel: D&C 6:8 and D&C 11:8. The message of these verses ought to be our watchcry: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you; and if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation.” Both scriptures say exactly the same thing. I am not just talking about desiring to be a good teacher or desiring to change hearts. We need to desire to do much good in this generation.

Some of the missionaries entering the Missionary Training Center are marvelous examples of conversion from strong Latter-day Saint homes of deep gospel knowledge. But many missionaries do not come from this type of home. The desire to be a defining force in the lives of students has to become a driving passion so that when we see those who lack conviction and depth in the gospel, we can help build their testimonies. To build desire, we have to pray, plead, and work. We have to pay a price just as Enos did when he wrestled with the Lord.

### **2. Help provide strong member support.**

The catalytic factor where a member, friend, associate, or relative becomes integral in the conversion process can be true of teachers as well. I think of Stan Peterson’s sharing of two student letters that were examples of pivotal experiences in seminary. In one of the letters, the student mentioned her teacher, Russ Davies. This girl had come from a very abusive home with a less-active family. Just seeing her teacher’s smiling face and knowing he loved her turned this girl’s whole life around.

As teachers, we should make sure we are helping provide member support. In some cases, we become for young persons the supporting member—the rock, the friend, the counselor, the one they know loves them despite what might be going on at home. We become a model, especially reflecting the positive role of a spouse.

If students love their seminary and institute teachers, the teachers’ privacy might be affected adversely. That is, young people have no concept of time. They can and will call to talk or stay so late that teachers can barely keep their eyes open. They will just keep talking because they love their teachers so much. Many of these students come from unhappy homes where they never

see a positive marriage or a functional family. Part of being the support they need is providing the model they can look up to.

In providing member support, teachers also need to facilitate friendships. In his book *Teach Ye Diligently*, President Boyd K. Packer writes about a student who was a social outcast. To help this student, the teacher asked the seminary council simply to walk with her from the high school to the seminary.<sup>xv2</sup> This common act changed that student's life. As noted previously, 86 percent of those who are converted and remain active have had a Latter-day Saint associate to strengthen them and help them in their conversion process. We need to concentrate on this kind of association as teachers.

### **3. Facilitate the experiment.**

Since the first factor in the conversion process is a willingness to experiment, as teachers, we can stimulate that experimentation. There are four basic ways to do this.

*First, teach them the principle.* There ought to be many times when we say, "The only way you are going to know for yourself is to try it. You cannot just simply open your mind and say, 'Heavenly Father, bless me.'" What is the definition of a sign seeker? The Lord condemns those who want confirmation without experimentation—those who want proof without effort.

*Second, model the process.* Show the students how to do it.

*Third, promise students in the name of the Lord that if they experiment, they will receive a confirmation.* That is what the scriptures teach. Promise them that they will see a difference if they are a little kinder to their brothers and sisters. Ask them to pray for strength not to use bad language in the locker room, and they will find that strength coming into their hearts.

*Fourth, challenge them.* I will give you an example from my own family. We had a son in high school who struck sparks with his mother every time they talked. No matter what we asked him to do, he fought us on it; life was a constant battle. I thought we had taught him better than that, but this conflict deeply affected his relationship with his mother. In fact, it affected the whole family. One day his seminary teacher, whom he deeply respected, said, "I sense a little bit of conflict between you and your mother."

"Yeah, that's for sure."

"Do you hassle her when she asks you to do things?"

"Yeah."

"Does she make you do it anyway?"

"Well, yeah."

"Why don't you try this? The next time she asks you to do something, if you are going to end up doing it anyway, instead of hassling her, just say, 'Yes, Mother, I'd love to.'"

That's what he did. I thought my wife would die of shock—that simple thing changed their whole relationship. Interestingly, he is now a CES teacher and has been in the seminary program for eight years. The primary reason behind this change was a seminary teacher who not only loved him but also challenged him to experiment on the word.

Counseling students to experiment on the word is something teachers should do all the time. For example, teachers should say, "Read the Book of Mormon and pray about it. Don't just study; don't just read to mark it on your chart. Pray about it. Try it. See if doing these things makes a difference."

To fuel students' desire to experiment on the word, teachers should promise them in the name of the Lord that if they will experiment, they will receive confirmation—because that is what the scriptures teach. Simply promise them, "Look, just try to be a little kinder to your brothers and sisters, and I promise you that you will see a difference. Pray for strength that you don't use that

kind of language in the locker room, and you will find that strength coming into your heart.” That’s the kind of thing we can do to stimulate the experiment.

#### **4. Nurture the confirmation.**

Following are two missionary examples that illustrate the problem of shallow conversion. A common scenario is one in which the missionaries say to an investigator, “Will you read the Book of Mormon and pray about it?”

Let us assume the answer is “Yes.”

The next time they meet, the missionaries check on the reading progress to discover that the investigator did not read because the text was too confusing. What does the missionary say? “Well, try harder.”

In other words, the investigator is the problem. That is not very nurturing.

Instead, some missionaries try another tactic. In the same situation, the missionaries say, “Let’s go to a passage you were reading. Show me what was troubling you.” And then they begin to define words and ask, “Now, do you see what the Lord is saying here? This is what He means.”

That is nurturing.

Here is another missionary example. After a Church meeting, two missionaries ask their investigators what they thought of the meeting. “Well, it was pretty noisy, actually. Our church is very quiet and reverent.”

One missionary ducks his head and says, “Well, yeah, that is a little embarrassing.”

That is the nonnurturing missionary, whereas the nurturing missionary says, “I know, but there is something you need to understand about us. We believe in what Christ said, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me’ (Mark 10:14). We believe passionately that the family is an eternal unit, and so we are willing to take the children into our meetings because it is so important in this family process.” With new perspective, a nurturing person turns the negative experience into a confirming experience.

Teachers can turn bad experiences into positive outcomes in three ways.

*First, help students work through the process.* If students come back and say, “Brother Jones, you know, I tried what you said and it just didn’t work.” In response, do not just say, “Try harder.” Sit down and say, “Tell me about it. What was going on? What were you doing?”

Teachers should nurture students and help them work through the process of confirmation.

*Second, help students see the hand of the Lord.* Many will try the experiment and feel as though they did not see anything happening as promised. The teacher’s responsibility is to help them identify the soft whispering of the Spirit. When an investigator comes back and says, “You know, as I was thinking about this, all of a sudden a warm feeling came over me,” what does a missionary do? The missionary says, “That’s the Spirit!”

Many of our young people don’t know or recognize the Spirit, so we have to help them identify it.

*Third, testify to students.* Teachers need to testify that the process works, and they should testify from their own experiences. Teachers can also tell scripture stories. The principles associated with conversion are scattered throughout all the scriptures. Teachers should testify of God’s love and His mercy, testify that He knows students and cares for them, and testify that the process works. In so doing, teachers will nurture the confirmation.

#### **5. Teach students how the Spirit works.**

Students have many misconceptions about the Spirit. The First Presidency is concerned that some members may not be having spiritual experiences that change their hearts. We may have emotional experiences in the Church, especially with our youth, but if the experiences are not

from the Spirit, they don't really change the heart. As we know, there is such a thing as counterfeit revelation. There is counterfeit revelation that comes from the evil side and counterfeit revelation that comes from our own emotions. We get confused and want something so badly we convince ourselves it is from the Lord.

Following are seven principles that will help students understand how the Spirit works.

*The Lord sets all conditions of revelation.* The most important aspect of understanding the Spirit is knowing that the Lord sets all conditions of revelation. Although the base scripture is D&C 88:68 and though it is clear, its interpretation is violated so frequently that it is almost unbelievable: "Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you" (D&C 88:68). And then comes this statement: "And it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will." That is, the Lord sets all conditions of revelation.

This principle is so simple and yet so profound. Revelation comes in the Lord's own time. How frequently do we stipulate the time by which we expect the Lord to give us an answer? How often do we tell Him we need a solution to the problem right now? Sometimes we act like the Lord is the Sears catalog. We ring up an order, ask Him to deliver it by Federal Express, and, if possible, request Him to overnight it to us. We need to realize that the Lord answers us in His own time.

On 28 February 2001, Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke to missionaries at the Provo MTC, delivering a profound talk on revelation. One of the things he said was, "We need to learn not only to pray 'Thy will be done,' but 'Thy time be done.'" That is a great lesson.

The Lord also sets the *how* of revelation. Revelation comes across a wide spectrum of experiences—some very direct, some very subtle—but we don't tell Him *how* or *when* to give us a revelation. In fact, if we try to press things in our timetable, we open the way to be deceived. We should remember a movement some years ago in which some people said, "I'm going up into the mountain, and I'm not coming down until I have a spiritual confirmation." In essence, such seekers after truth are telling the Lord how to do His business. How can we—simple, ignorant, sinful, finite individuals—tell the Infinite how best to help us? That is the ultimate audacity, and yet we are guilty of it far too often. We tell God what we want. We work out the whole problem and then ask the Lord to bring it about for us. We must be careful that we don't try to tell the Lord how to do His business. As Jacob 4:10 teaches, "Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand."

*Revelation comes in quiet, subtle, nondramatic ways.* I remember one occasion when I came home from work and found my daughter standing at the sink. "Good afternoon," I said. She burst into tears. When I asked her what was the matter, she blurted out, "I don't have a testimony, Dad."

I was flabbergasted because this girl had always been diligent in doing what is right. Some nights I got up at 1:20 a.m. and went downstairs to find her reading her scriptures after her night shift at McDonald's just so she would not miss a day. "Not a testimony! How can you say that?"

Evidently, a well-meaning teacher had given a lesson on testimony. He used three potent examples of conversion with them: Alma the Younger, Enos, and King Lamoni. That is very tough competition. Although those are real experiences, they are not typical. Because my daughter's conversion was not dramatic or marvelous, she felt she was void of a testimony. As a precursor to my explaining that revelation comes in quiet, subtle, nondramatic ways, I facetiously asked, "So what are you looking for—three days of unconsciousness?"

Two scriptures define this second principle: D&C 85:6 and D&C 8:2–3. The first scripture tells us two things: (1) the voice of the Lord is still and small and (2) it whispers. The second tells us that revelation comes to our minds (thoughts) and hearts (feelings). What an interesting description! As I have said on occasion, it is too bad the Lord does not use microphones and eighty-megawatt speakers so the room thunders and we feel the walls vibrate. Then, we would say, “Yes, that one was from the Lord.” Thunderous answers are very rare, and that is part of the Lord’s way.

There is great wisdom to absorb here—if the Lord gets too direct, the result overwhelms our agency. He is always very careful about agency. The other thing we have to remember is that revelation comes across a wide spectrum. There are occasions where the Lord actually speaks to people in an audible voice. I have never personally heard an audible voice, although I have a friend who did. What came to him in that audible voice is no more important than what comes in the quiet whisperings of the Spirit. It is what comes, not how it comes, that matters. In D&C 6:14, we learn that inspiration sometimes comes as flashes of insight—or what I call the “aha experience.” We should watch for that in our students. When we are teaching and all of a sudden a student’s head jerks up and he or she says, “Oh!” then we are doing what we ought to be doing. And in D&C 6:15, we learn that inspiration comes as enlightenment.

*The Lord puts His “signature” on revelation.* In working with students, teachers should watch for what I call “the Lord’s signature.” Sometimes the Lord answers prayers in such a way that it is unmistakably from Him. This is the Lord’s “autograph.” It is as if He is saying, “This one is from Me.” We need to have the eyes to see His signature. Following are two examples of this principle.

A busy mother of five was assigned to give the spiritual living lesson one Sunday morning. Her husband left at 6 a.m. for his bishopric meeting, so it was up to the mother to get all the children to the chapel on time. Relief Society was the first hour, nine o’clock, so she was trying to get there a little early to set up. As she tells the story, “By five minutes to nine, I was still missing two of a possible four pairs of shoes. We had searched everywhere, and my tension level was rising. I was starting to yell at the children, ‘We’ve got to find those shoes!’ Suddenly, I realized I didn’t like what was happening to me, knowing that I was going to have to go and supposedly teach by the Spirit. So I bowed my head and said, ‘Heavenly Father, I know shoes are not a big thing in the kingdom, but I need your help if I’m going to give this lesson with the Spirit.’ I said, ‘amen,’ raised my head, and opened my eyes to see the two shoes in the crack between the refrigerator and the wall. My youngest had stuffed them in there. Now, that was just like the Lord saying, ‘I heard you and this one’s from me.’”

Another example of the Lord’s “signature” comes from the wonderful Church history account of Ellen Neibaur. She was so poor that she walked barefoot to Utah because she could not afford shoes. For eight years, she literally put pennies aside to save enough money for a pair of high-top, button, patent-leather shoes from the East. When her shoes finally arrived, she was very proud of them. A few days later, she went to the 1856 October general conference where Brigham Young stood up and said, “Brethren and sisters, we have just learned that there are two handcart companies out on the plains. We need drivers. We need teams. We need flour. We need clothing. We need shoes.” Sister Neibaur, after eight years of sacrifice, went right to the back of the old tabernacle, sat down, and took off those new shoes and gave them to the rescue effort. What a wonderful display of faith, commitment, and covenant!

Interestingly, when the handcart companies finally came in, all the Saints went out to meet them. Typically, when meeting incoming companies, the Saints searched faces to find someone they knew. What do you think Ellen Neibaur was looking at? She was looking at feet. She wanted to

see who had gotten her shoes. When she finally saw them, she was utterly astonished. It was a childhood friend from England who had not yet joined the Church at the time Ellen left but since had joined and had come across the plains with the Martin and Willie handcart companies.<sup>xvi</sup>3 It was as if the Lord had said, “I know what you did. Let me validate that for you in a special way.” Teach your students to look for those kinds of experiences.

*Revelation is an active, not a passive, experience.* Along with teaching students to look for the Lord’s hand in their lives, we should teach them that revelation is an active rather than a passive experience. This principle is taught in D&C 9:7, in which the Lord chastises thoughtless prayers: “You took no thought save it was to ask me.” That is true of many of our students. Sometimes students think all they have to do is ask, but what they fail to realize is that revelation is not a passive experience. It is not a spectator sport. The verbs used in the scriptures call for action. Rather than our simply reading the scriptures, the Lord invites us to “treasure up . . . the words of life” (D&C 84:85), “seek ye diligently,” (D&C 88:118), “[feast] upon the word” (2 Nephi 31:20), and be diligent, humble, and faithful.

President Packer stated, “There are those who have made a casual, even an insincere, effort to test the scriptures and have come away having received nothing, which is precisely what they have earned and what they deserve. If a person thinks these books will yield to a casual inquiry, to idle curiosity, or even to well-intentioned but temporary searching, he is mistaken. They likewise will not yield to the overzealous or to the fanatic.”<sup>xvii</sup>4 What a powerful concept!

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “When man begins to hunger, when arms begin to reach, when knees begin to bend and voices begin to articulate, then, and not until then, does the Lord make himself known.”<sup>xviii</sup>5 We do our students a great disservice if we do not tell them that a price has to be paid for these spiritual experiences. If it were not so, we would not value them. They would not become heart-changing. They would not become life-changing.

Concerning revelation, Elder Maxwell said during a talk on 28 February 2001 at the Provo MTC, “I’ve been studying personal revelation for about ten years now.” This was electrifying to me; I had never thought of it in this way—studying revelation. Later, in the same talk, he said, “President Packer often teaches the Twelve this principle, and I quote, ‘The Lord often gives direction without explanation.’” That is frustrating, isn’t it? Our nature is to want to know why. The Lord gives us a prompting, and we say, “So what am I supposed to do with this?” Often, the Lord chooses not to answer this question at that point.

A phrase in the hymn “Lead, Kindly Light” has come to mean a lot to me. In the second verse is the sentence “I do not ask to see the distant scene—one step enough for me.” How do we get direction without explanation? On the trail, as the rescue party for the handcart companies went down about three miles into the willows near Rock Creek to wait for further word from the express company, there was a howling blizzard in the camp. Winters in the Wyoming area are fierce. I have talked to ranchers who say that when they are in a Wyoming blizzard, they have to be careful going from the house to the barn because they can get lost and never return. Despite the snow, a man named Harvey Cluff started worrying about the express party, thinking, “How are they going to know we pulled off the trail if they turn around and come back?” Reluctantly, he decided to go back and post a sign. Harvey Cluff later commented, “It was a difficult thing for me to face that northern blast as I went back up the hill.” That is an understatement.

Now, think of a blizzard. Think how fast footprints can be erased. Brother Cluff went on to report, “I had only been back to camp a short time when two men rode up from the Willie handcart company.” James G. Willie and Joseph Elder must have come within five or ten minutes of Harvey’s putting up the sign. Imagine what would have happened if Willie and Elder



had passed by. They would have perished along with the whole company. Sometimes God gives us direction without explanation.

*True revelation does not contradict gospel principles or established Church procedure.* We should teach students to understand that true revelation never contradicts gospel principles or established Church procedure. However, there is one exception to this standard—when the prophet receives new direction from the Lord. All things must be done in order. We do not have the right to contradict gospel principles or established Church procedure, but the prophet does. We are counseled in D&C 28:13 not to go contrary to God’s order. Yet sometimes we have the wildest rumors passed around. I’ve sometimes felt that the Church has a system of communication that puts AT&T, MCI, and Sprint to absolute shame. We pass around stories of hitchhikers warning us about food storage. In firesides, we give warnings of upcoming earthquakes. We have predicted the Second Coming—the actual date—even though the scriptures explicitly say, “The hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor shall they know until he comes” (D&C 49:7). I actually heard a fireside tape of a man who, after quoting that scripture, said, “I know what that scripture says about no one knowing, but with diligent efforts, I have worked it out.” The incredible thing was that this was passed to me as a bishop by one of my ward members. Teach your students that revelation never contradicts Church principles. Elder Dallin H. Oaks tells the story of a woman who was deeply hurt by her lifelong friend. She decided she wanted to get even, so she prayed for help. We laugh at that, but there are people, some of them students, who do things like this—contrary to how the Church works.

*The Lord expects His children to develop spiritual self-reliance.* As the Lord points out in D&C 58:26–27, “a slothful and not a wise servant” is the kind of servant who has to be told everything to do. Therefore, the Lord expects us to develop spiritual self-reliance.

Elder Maxwell stated in his talk at the Provo MTC that “expecting revelation in every little thing leads to being misled.” I’ve known people like that. They credit everything to the Spirit. “The Spirit told me to do this or to do that.” “I can’t do that because the Spirit hasn’t confirmed it.” Elder Oaks commented, “We believe in *continuing* revelation, not *continuous* revelation.”<sup>xix</sup><sup>6</sup> That is a great concept. He also said, “The Spirit of the Lord is not likely to give us revelations on matters that are trivial. I once heard a young woman in testimony meeting praise the spirituality of her husband, indicating that he submitted every question to the Lord. She told how he had accompanied her shopping and would not even choose between different brands of canned vegetables without making his selection a matter of prayer.”<sup>xx</sup><sup>7</sup> Now, if you read that statement to students, you will have students who will say, “Wow! Wouldn’t it be great to be that spiritual?” Elder Oaks responded by saying, “That strikes me as improper. I believe the Lord expects us to use the intelligence and experience He has given us to make these kinds of choices.”<sup>xxi</sup><sup>8</sup>

*Revelation for others must involve appropriate stewardship.* As we read in D&C 28:6, “Thou shalt not command him who is at thy head.” Therefore, there is a principle of stewardship in revelation. We never get true revelation for someone unless we have a stewardship over that person—parents for children, a bishop for his ward, and so forth. As soon as the bishop starts telling the stake president what to do, the bishop is out of line. When Johnny says he has had a revelation that his girlfriend is to marry him, the girl need not pay attention. Johnny has no stewardship over her. He cannot get a revelation that tells her what to do. She has a right to receive her own revelation. Carlfred Broderick, a Latter-day Saint family counselor, calls that kind of revelation a “hormonal revelation.”

The end result of all that is done in the Church Educational System is conversion—through scripture mastery, object lessons, institute socials, and all the hundreds of things done in the program. If what is done is not sustaining, supporting, or facilitating conversion, that activity is not accomplishing the primary goal of CES.

I have a strong testimony that someday everyone in the CES program will stand before the Lord and have Him say, “Tell me what you did.” I do not think I will be ashamed if I at least can say, “I tried. Sometimes I failed, but I really tried.” But I cannot imagine saying to the Savior of the world, “I am sorry. I did not care enough.”

What we do matters greatly. In D&C 78:17, we are told about the great blessings the Father has prepared for us, and we will be blessed if we turn to Him and help our students do the same.

#### Notes

1. M. Russell Ballard, address given at Martin’s Cove, Wyoming, 11 July 2001.
2. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 149–50.
3. “Ellen Breakell Neibaur, Wife of Alexander Neibaur,” unpublished manuscript compiled by Jolene Smith Davis, copy in author’s possession.
4. Boyd K. Packer, *Things of the Soul* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 14.
5. Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 453–54.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Teaching by the Spirit,” 1994 new mission presidents’ seminar.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, “Revelation,” in *Brigham Young University 1981–82 Fireside and Devotional Speeches* (1982), 26.
8. Ibid.

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## Historical Data about Presidents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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One of the desirable outcomes of a mature organization is the accumulation, over time, of historical information about the organization. That information can be retained or disseminated by the organization according to its policies, or the information can be used by individuals or groups with interests or ties to the organization.

From its inception, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been vitally concerned with historical information about itself (see D&C 21:1). By commandment received on the day the Church was organized, the Lord said, “A record shall be kept.”<sup>xxii</sup>1 The Church has been very diligent in the past 170-plus years in fulfilling this inspiring charge. In fact, perhaps few organizations have been as concerned or as diligent in accumulating information about themselves as has the Church of Jesus Christ. An interesting study would be one that compares the amount and variety of information accumulated about various ecclesiastical organizations in the world. I think the Church would fare extremely well in such an investigation.

Many action verbs can be used to describe the activities that potentially take place associated with Church historical information. Such action verbs as *keep*, *record*, *accumulate*, *gather*, *store*, *retrieve*, *chronicle*, *report*, *enter*, *post*, *write*, *transcribe*, *itemize*, *collect*, *gather*, *amass*, *assemble*, and *compile* are examples of verbs associated with the keeping of historical information. Other action verbs such as *examine*, *analyze*, *apply*, *employ*, *use*, *manipulate*, and