

sermon, he challenged his listeners: “If you believe all these things see that ye do them” (Mosiah 4:10). The response of his “spiritual students” was miraculous. They rejoiced “with such exceedingly great joy” and promised “we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments . . . all the remainder of our days” (Mosiah 5:4–5). What more could a teacher hope for?

Spirit, gratitude, testimony, and challenge—these are the nourishing agents of the spiritual greenhouse that allow the doctrine of the Atonement to thrive and blossom with radiant beauty. Teaching this doctrine requires the highest and best within us—our most creative powers, our most submissive spirit, and our finest intellectual faculties. For, in truth, it is the most profound, moving doctrine we will ever be privileged to teach.

Notes

1. This essay is a distillation of and reflection on Elder Tad R. Callister’s book, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000).
2. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 9.
3. Robert L. Millet, “Foreword,” in Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), ix.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 33.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 467.
6. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Collier Books, 1996), 129.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 18.
8. McConkie, “The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” 10.

“These Miracles That Thou Doest”: A Student’s Tribute to Gospel Teachers

Matthew J. Grey

Matthew J. Grey is an undergraduate student in Near Eastern Studies at BYU. He also is a part-time seminary teacher at the Liahona Private School in Pleasant Grove, Utah.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland pointed out in the April 1998 general conference, the New Testament offers insight into what it means to be a truly inspired gospel teacher. On a late night, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus and made a powerful statement. Speaking in the plural (on behalf of other Pharisees and rulers), Nicodemus told the Master, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God: *for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*” (John 3:2; emphasis added).

Here an otherwise slow-to-understand Nicodemus offers a powerful truth. Indeed, a very real sign that follows those called of God to teach is the working of miracles. In my life, gospel teachers and their messages have been miraculous. As a boy growing up in a divorced and less-active family, I have experienced a long line of gospel teachers who have taught, inspired, and brought about life-changing miracles. Such experiences not only resulted in subsequent Church activity on my part but also instilled in me a strong desire to emulate these teachers—by being a gospel teacher myself.

Testimony of the Gospel and of the Consecrated Life

The high-school years were a crucial period in my life. Without The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an important part of my life, I focused most of my time and attention on the usual—girls and music! I felt these pursuits were to be my primary, lifelong endeavors. It was

always interesting to me that a man from the Church, a home teacher, visited my mother's house every month without fail.

Over a long period of time, that home teacher and I became wonderful friends. We played guitar together and discussed a strong mutual interest in American history. The friendship lasted for years. I can vividly remember by my junior year becoming more and more interested in his messages of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. His visits became longer as I asked question after question about the things I was learning. It was not until some time later that I realized the years this faithful man spent visiting a less-active family and the hours he spent away from his own were sacrifices he made to discuss the word of God with a struggling seventeen-year-old. His diligence in his teaching responsibilities planted the seed that became a powerful testimony for me.

During my senior year, the miracle intensified. My best friend from school had been asking me questions about the church I was becoming interested in. I didn't feel confident in my answers, so we contacted the missionaries and met with them in my home. As we went through the missionary discussions, my understanding of the plan of salvation grew; and for the first time, I began to feel the power of testimony at work in my life. As I look back today, the conversion seemed to take place overnight. Watching these two missionaries, not much older than I was, I came to a life-changing moment. I realized that if the things I was learning were true (and I was quickly learning they were)—that Joseph Smith is a prophet, Jesus Christ is our Savior, and the Church is the kingdom of God on the earth—then nothing else mattered.

During that important early period of my conversion, a personal motto began to develop from my association with these gospel teachers: "But seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God and to establish his righteousness" (JST, Matthew 6:33). Once the testimony came, my natural feelings were to devote my life to being like these teachers who had given up so much personal comfort and interest for my sake. Most of my plans changed (the girls *and* the music!), and I made a major decision. I decided to serve a full-time mission for the Church.

This late high-school period was a critical time for me. Without question, these dedicated teachers of the gospel were miracles themselves. Neither the home teacher nor the missionaries gave up on me and my family. Their diligence and love of the Savior changed my life in a way I could not have known then. Their efforts, many of which at the time surely seemed futile, will remain a blessing for generations to come. **Love of Teaching and of Learning the Word of God**

Following my mission to northern California, I moved from Chicago to Provo, Utah, to be with more members of the Church. Among the first things I did was to enroll in the Orem Utah Institute of Religion. Since I was working to save money at the time, I was able to take a variety of classes from wonderful Church Educational System teachers. These teachers played their part in a long line of influential factors in my life. Two examples in particular stand out.

One of the first teachers I became acquainted with taught a Book of Mormon class. This man was completely in love with the scriptures. But more than anything, it was obvious that his real love was teaching them to students. His entire life was dedicated to teaching others and helping them to build faith and testimony through the word of God. My mission had certainly taught me to love teaching the gospel, but this institute teacher gave me a greater perspective. He showed me in a powerful way the importance of teaching the gospel as a lifelong pursuit.

However, just as with the missionaries, I found myself wanting to be just like my teacher. So regardless of the high competition and pressure to get married, I made a decision to find a way to teach the scriptures in a religious setting, and I began to look into seminary teaching. Currently

in the hiring process (and not married!), I am not sure where this path will lead. However, for me the important thing is the new mind-set I received from this powerful teacher. It is the teaching and resultant blessing of lives that continues to perform miracles. I am confident this outcome can be achieved regardless of what happens during the seminary hiring process.

Along with learning to love teaching, I was taught about the love of learning by another gospel teacher during the first year home from my mission. Also a teacher at the Orem institute, this man had a passion for learning the scriptures, particularly in the context of the ancient world. Quite at the sacrifice of other things to be done, he spent hours with me in his office. We discussed ancient temple symbolism, the ancient languages of the scriptural texts, the history of the ancient world, and, most importantly, the relationships of these things to the restored gospel. These hours dramatically changed my life. It seemed that teaching the gospel (which I was then doing at the Missionary Training Center and with Especially for Youth) was not enough. From then on, most of my time was spent intensively learning the historical background, languages, and symbols of the scriptures. This drive led me into Near Eastern Studies, a semester at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, and a summer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem— all for the reason of better learning the word of God.

As with the home teacher and the missionaries in high school, these Church Educational System teachers played a critical role in my life as a returned missionary. Their love for teaching and learning the gospel has produced a miracle whose final outcome I still cannot predict. Regardless of what opportunities the Lord has for me in these areas, my love for teaching and learning the gospel will forever be a blessing from these teachers.

The Gospel Life and the Zion Family

Having just recently returned from almost a year in the Middle East, I was able to associate closely with various faculty members and staff of the BYU Jerusalem Center. This summer while I was attending the Hebrew University, there were only a few Latter-day Saint students in the Holy Land and about the same number of BYU teachers and their families. This interesting situation allowed me to become close friends with a BYU teacher of ancient scripture and his family. Because this teacher is a top scholar in his field, I was looking forward to all the great things I hoped to learn from this close association. However, while I did indeed gain many of the scriptural insights I was hoping for, the real lessons I learned were about family.

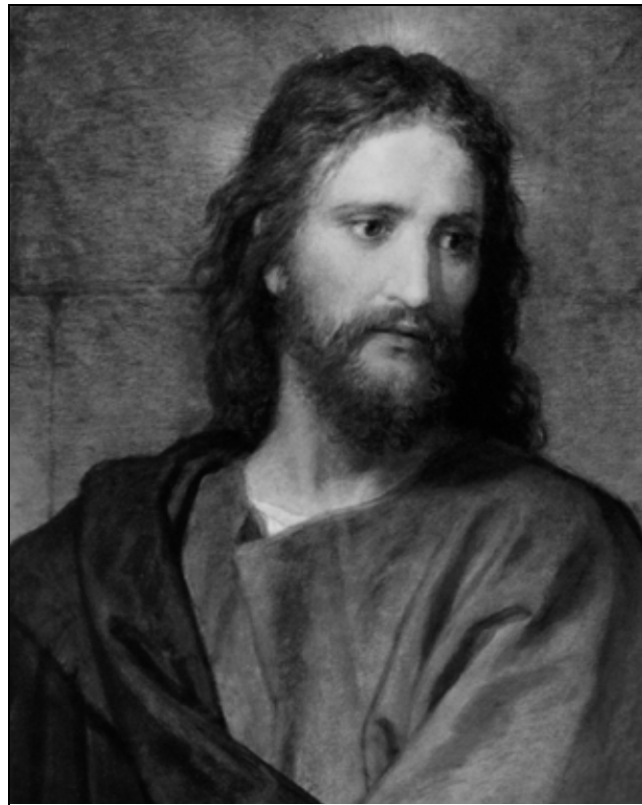
Watching up close the love this teacher has for his wife and children—how he and his family live the gospel and how teaching and learning the scriptures are a way of life for them—I felt I had a clear idea of what I wanted for my own future family. Never before had I seen a husband and wife so unified in their desires. I was equally impressed with their relationships with their children. It seemed like years of traveling around the world in various teaching responsibilities brought this family close together. The children all had a deep interest in learning and were brilliant. Above all, this great master of the scriptures and teacher loved his family. He often made remarks concerning his family as his “most valuable possessions.”

This experience changed my life in a profound way. I had thought that love of teaching and learning must be at the forefront of life in the Church. However, this man and his family gave me an even higher goal to aim for—the living of a gospel life and the rearing of a Zion family. In some ways, this instilled vision has become one of the greatest miracles of all. For the first time in my life, I was able to witness firsthand the joy of a family unified in a life of gospel living. For this family, teaching and learning the word of God is a way of life. I am sure that, after their example, my standards for a future family will be forever elevated.

In Tribute

Without question, one of the most powerful influences in my life has been teachers and their message of the gospel. From a boy in a divorced and less-active family to one desiring to dedicate my life to gospel living and teaching, I now understand it is the miracle of gospel teachers that has made all the difference. I will forever be grateful to a diligent home teacher who never gave up and who offered unconditional friendship. I will also never forget the missionaries who dedicated their lives to the work and taught me to seek first to build the kingdom. Since my mission, my love for teaching and learning the word of God is the result of wonderful teachers. Finally, I gained the vision of living the gospel and having a Zion family from a scholar and a teacher.

This series of associations with teachers, as well as experiences with countless others, has been a miracle in convincing me that these individuals are all “teachers come from God.” I am not sure whether the examples I mentioned have even an idea of what they have done for me and my future family. Too often such things do not get expressed. However, their examples and teaching will always serve as a guide and inspiration for me, and I hope to continue the work they started. God be thanked for such gospel teachers and their legacy of miracles.



Heinrich Hofmann (1824–1911) detail of the painting
Christ and the Rich Young Ruler

© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. Used by permission.

The Great Commandment: Principle or Platitude?

Howard A. Christy

Howard A. Christy recently retired as the senior editor of scholarly publications at BYU.