

44. From the Minutes of the Summit Stake, 5 August 1916, as extracted and noted by staff at the Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
45. James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, October 1914, 102.
46. “Resurrection of Christ Stands Forth as Beacon of Hope to All Peoples,” *Deseret Evening News*, 29 April 1916.



Arnold Friberg (b. 1913) painting,
Brother of Jared Seeing the Finger of the Lord

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“Touch These Stones . . . That They May Shine Forth in Darkness”: Inspiring Students to Let Their Light Shine through Creative Works

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Seventeenth-century artists employed a technique called *chiaroscuro* in which the extreme contrasts between light and darkness are highlighted to achieve dramatic and emotional effect and to create depth. Because Rembrandt first painted his canvas backgrounds black, the contrasting lighter colors shimmered and stood out more. Similarly, the light of the restored gospel is all the more brilliant when painted across the darker landscape of the world. There is a great need for a creative community of Latter-day Saints whose works reflect gospel light and radiate with the Spirit. The Restoration is both a *declaration* of light as well as a *refutation* of darkness. Teachers of youth play a major role in preparing the hearts and minds of their students to rise up and become latter-day lights whose works will shine in the darkness.

The everlasting covenant has been sent into the world as a standard, as a light for people to seek after, and as a messenger to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord (see D&C 45:9). But

before the “kingdom of heaven may come,” the kingdom of God must “go forth” across the earth (see D&C 65:2, 6). The Lord’s arm will continue to be made bare in the eyes of all nations, and He will continue to bring His restored gospel “out of obscurity and out of darkness” (D&C 1:30). The same can also be true of our students—individual talents can be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness to enlighten the world. We live in the promised day when God said He would pour out His Spirit “upon all flesh” and when many young men and young women would “dream dreams” and “see visions” (Joel 2:28). “Verily I say unto you all,” the Savior declared to those living in the latter days, “arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:5).

Where are our great writers? Where are our stellar actors and actresses? Where are our great artists and advertisers? Where are our musicians who will master what might possibly be the most powerful tool of communication ever revealed? Where are our computer programmers whose creativity will instruct as well as inspire? Have all the great artisans already come and gone? No, these creative members of the kingdom are sitting in our classes. We believe the greatest contributions have yet to be made. Elder Orson F. Whitney noted: “We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own. God’s ammunition is not exhausted. His brightest spirits are held in reserve for the latter times. In God’s name and by his help we will build up a literature whose top shall touch heaven, though its foundations may now be low in earth.”^{cxii}1 If our students are going to produce creative works “whose top shall touch heaven,” they first need to be inspired. To those who teach, I offer the following twelve suggestions about what we can do to help inspire the rising generation to greatness.

1. Teach them who they are and give them hope.

As I approached my first institute class, in which I set out to instruct college students for the first time, I was worried and humbled. It was an introductory Book of Mormon course, and I had a lesson prepared, but I sincerely wanted to touch my students’ hearts. I had prayed for that ability, worked hard on the lesson, and was now heading to meet my students. In the hallway, I passed two prominent faculty members. They were both giants in the classroom. I had observed them both. Their teaching styles were as polar as could be imagined, but they were both highly successful. As I walked near them, they glanced up and smiled. “I’m headed to my first class,” I said, “what should I teach?” I was hoping one of them would have a readiness suggestion or a get-to-know-you idea—something to help me get the class started on the right foot. Without hesitation, the first blurted out, “Teach them who they are!” and the second chimed in, “And give them hope!”

The Spirit fell over the three of us. It happened so quickly and so unexpectedly that we were all surprised. I thanked them both, and as I walked to class, I knew that what they had said was true. I realized that in addition to hearing the words of the scriptures and of the living prophets in the classroom, students need to “know who they are” and “have hope” that they can do their Heavenly Father’s will.

That brief, unanticipated experience has been a guidepost to me for every class since. When students come to know who they are and when they have hope, they can achieve great things. President Gordon B. Hinckley has reminded the youth on several occasions, “You are a great generation. . . . I think you are the best generation who have ever lived in this Church.”^{cxiii}2 Edifying teaching inspires and builds. It strengthens and motivates. When truths are taught and the Spirit is felt, “he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22).

To help students remember who they are, I like to read with them what the Savior declared to President Joseph F. Smith (see D&C 138:53–56). He was told that the students we teach are part of a generation of “choice spirits” who were “reserved” to come forth at this hour of earth’s history, who were taught by prophets before they were born, and who were “prepared to come forth” so they could “labor in His vineyard for the salvation of souls” in these latter days.

2. Teach students to educate themselves in the things of the Spirit.

When students are taught to remember who they are, eternally speaking, then they can create the proper circumstances in their mortal lives that will enable them to enjoy the Spirit as abundantly as before they were born. Of all the aptitudes we could develop in the premortal life, spirituality is the greatest. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Men are not born equal. They enter this life with the talents and capacities developed in preexistence.” He further noted that “the talent of greatest worth was that of spirituality, for it enables us to hearken to the Holy Spirit and accept that gospel which prepares us for eternal life.”^{cxiv}3 On another occasion, he wrote: “Above all talents—greater than any other capacities, chief among all endowments—stands the talent for spirituality. Those so endowed find it easy to believe the truth in this life.”^{cxv}4

Obviously, our students come to us with a great familiarity of the Spirit. In this second estate, we all need to regain our premortal ability to communicate in what the Prophet Joseph Smith called “the language of *inspiration*,”^{cxvi}5 or, as President John Taylor said, be “taught, instructed and directed by the spirit of revelation proceeding from the Almighty”^{cxvii}6 with which we were once very familiar.

By our teaching students to recognize and follow the promptings of the Spirit, they will be guided to do what is right (see Isaiah 30:21). There are many ways the Holy Ghost can communicate with us, but the most frequent way is through the still, small-voice whisperings that come to us as thoughts planted in our minds and feelings stirred in our hearts (see D&C 8:2–3). As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, thoughts that occupy our minds and feelings that press themselves upon us the strongest are promptings from the Spirit (see D&C 128:1).

The more in tune our students are with the Spirit, the more “anchored” they will be, enabling them to produce “good works” that “glorify God” (see Ether 12:4). Commenting on the importance of having the Spirit while working on creative works, President Boyd K. Packer said: “I mentioned earlier that the greatest hymns and anthems have not been composed, nor have the greatest illustrations been set down, nor the poems written, nor the paintings finished. When they are produced, who will produce them? Will it be the most talented and the most highly trained among us? I rather think it will not. They will be produced by those who are the most inspired among us. Inspiration can come to those whose talents are barely adequate, and their contribution will be felt for generations; and the Church and kingdom of God will move forward just a little more easily because they have been here.”^{cxviii}7

3. Teach students to view life from an eternal, latter-day perspective.

This is such a great day in which to live. Prophecies are coming to pass as the gospel of Jesus Christ goes to every nation and people. But ours is also a day of distractions. It is easy for our students to become distracted from doing things that really matter most or to become discouraged and think their contributions may not matter at all. At a time when the Prophet Moroni was feeling hopeless in trying to oppose the swelling tide of evil among the Nephites, his father, Mormon, wrote him these inspiring words: “And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God” (Moroni 9:6).

Our students, too, have an important role to play in these latter days. As Dr. Hugh Nibley once observed:

On the last night of a play the whole cast and stage crew stay in the theater until the small or not-so-small hours of the morning striking the old set. If there is to be a new opening soon, as the economy of the theater requires, it is important that the new set should be in place and ready for the opening night; all the while the old set was finishing its usefulness and then being taken down, the new set was rising in splendor to be ready for the drama that would immediately follow. So it is with this world. It is not our business to tear down the old set—the agencies that do that are already hard at work and very efficient—the set is coming down all around us with spectacular effect. Our business is to see to it that the new set is well on the way for what is to come—and that means a different kind of [culture], beyond the scope of the tragedy that is now playing its closing night. We are preparing for the establishment of Zion.^{cxix}8

Students need to be reassured that they were foreknown and forecalled to help build up Zion in these latter days in anticipation of the Savior's return when He will become the great power here on this earth. When the "curtain of heaven [is] unfolded" and the Author of the play comes on stage (see D&C 88:95), Zion has to be ready to make its global debut. Our students are part of the great vanguard company that has been sent to prepare the way.

4. Teach students to understand they are children of the covenant.

Father Abraham was promised that through his descendants, *all* the families of the earth would one day be blessed (3 Nephi 20:25). Nephi foresaw that the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled in the latter days (1 Nephi 15:18). "The . . . promise that Abraham's posterity would bless the earth, has found fulfillment in many, many ways. . . . Through the centuries, Abraham's descendants have made major contributions to world civilization through their advances and discoveries in government, philosophy, science, commerce, arts and letters and many other areas of our life."^{cxix}9 As children of the covenant, our students will increasingly be involved in blessing the families of the earth through their creative works.

In a mission presidents' seminar, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "Our message is so imperative, when you stop to think that the salvation, the eternal salvation of the world, rests upon the shoulders of this church. When all is said and done, if the world is going to be saved, we have to do it. There is no escaping from that. No other people in the history of the world have received the kind of mandate that we have received. We are responsible for all who have lived on this earth. That involves our family history and temple work. We are responsible for all who now live upon the earth, and that involves missionary work. And we are going to be responsible for all who will yet live upon the earth."^{cxix}10 **5. Teach students to find ways to use their talents to bless others.**

The talents our students have were not given solely to bless themselves or the Latter-day Saints. Our Heavenly Father has given them these gifts "that all may be profited thereby" (D&C 46:12). God loves *all* His children, and they need the blessings of the spiritual gifts that our students have been given.

If your students love to create, write, paint, dance, build, and so forth, they need to be encouraged to go out into the world and "do it." President John Taylor declared: "We must not forget that we owe a duty to the world. The Lord has given to us the light of eternity; and we are commanded not to conceal our light under a bushel. . . . We want men [and women] full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God that they may go forth . . . bearing precious seed and sowing

the seeds of eternal life, and then returning with gladness, bringing their sheaves with them.”^{cxix}11

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “Let us get our instruments tightly strung and our melodies sweetly sung. Let us not die with our music still in us. Let us rather use this precious mortal probation to move confidently and gloriously upward toward the eternal life which God our Father gives to those who keep His commandments.”^{cxix}12

Several times in recent years, the First Presidency has called on Latter-day Saints to become more involved in serving mankind by rendering increased civic service and becoming more involved in good causes.^{cxix}13 We can encourage our students to step out more into community circles and make positive contributions.

6. Remind students that people are attracted to light and good works.

People naturally resonate with great themes such as passion, drama, prophecy, dynamic tension, redemption, and moving stories that ring true or touch the inner soul. The entire concept of the Restoration is intertwined around all these great themes. When we make bold but gracious moves in our chosen fields with the themes of the Restoration in mind, and do so with the Spirit, people will respond. For example, as many of the published reviews claimed, a recent popular movie was better than the book. Why? Could it be because one Latter-day Saint artist had the courage to suggest that immorality be written out of the script and his suggestion was taken? People will choose goodness; they are motivated to do good things when moved by the power of uplifting drama, literature, and artistic works of quality. People want what is beautiful, true, and full of life. People want story-driven drama and human connections—but with higher values than the current *fare du jour*!

Satan has convinced the world that there is no glamour in goodness. We live in the day Isaiah foresaw, when people would “call evil good, and good evil; . . . put darkness for light, and light for darkness; [and] put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20). Babylon is a cultural wilderness, and people are starving for culture and beauty. Latter-day artists who will contribute most will need to commit themselves to seek beauty in all they create. “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (thirteenth article of faith). And our students need to be encouraged to *create* all these things!

As a student at BYU, Elder James E. Talmage once shared an experience that taught him an important lesson about letting the gospel light shine for others to see. He owned a small oil-burning study lamp. Because he depended upon it so much, he took excellent care of it, cleaning and trimming it daily. Elder Talmage related:

One summer evening I sat musing studiously and withal restfully in the open air outside the door of the room in which I lodged and studied. A stranger approached. I noticed that he carried a satchel. He was affable and entertaining. I brought another chair from within, and we chatted together till the twilight had deepened into dusk, the dusk into darkness.

Then he said: “You are a student, and doubtless have much work to do o’ nights. What kind of lamp do you use?” And without waiting for a reply he continued: “I have a superior lamp I should like to show you, a lamp designed and constructed according to the latest achievements of applied science, far surpassing anything heretofore produced as a means of artificial lighting.”

I replied with confidence, and I confess not without some exultation: “My friend, I have a lamp, one that has been tested and proved. It has been to me a companion through many a long night. It is an Argand lamp, and one of the best. I have

trimmed and cleaned it today; it is ready for the lighting. Step inside; I will show you my lamp, then you may tell me whether yours can possibly be better.”

We entered my study room, and with a feeling which I assume is akin to that of the athlete about to enter a contest with one whom he regards as a pitifully inferior opponent, I put the match to my well-trimmed Argand.

My visitor was voluble in his praise. It was the best lamp of its kind he said. He averred that he had never seen a lamp in better trim. He turned the wick up and down and pronounced the adjustment perfect. He declared that never before had he realized how satisfactory a student lamp could be.

I liked the man; he seemed to me wise, and he assuredly was ingratiating. . . .

“Now,” said he, “with your permission I’ll light *my* lamp.” He took from his satchel a lamp then known as the “Rochester.” It had a chimney which, compared with mine, was as a factory smoke-stack alongside a house flue. Its hollow wick was wide enough to admit my four fingers. Its light made bright the remotest corner of my room. In its brilliant blaze my own little Argand wick burned a weak, pale yellow. Until that moment of convincing demonstration I had never known the dim obscurity in which I had lived and labored, studied and struggled. “I’ll buy your lamp,” said I; “you need neither explain nor argue further.” I took my new acquisition to the laboratory that same night, and determined its capacity. It turned at over forty-eight candle power—fully four times the intensity of my student lamp.

Two days after purchasing, I met the lamp-peddler on the street, about noontime. To my inquiry he replied that business was good; the demand for his lamps was greater than the factory supply. “But,” said I, “you are not working today?” His rejoinder was a lesson: “Do you think that I would be so foolish as to go around trying to sell lamps in the daytime? Would you have bought one if I had lighted it for you when the sun was shining? I chose the time to show the superiority of my lamp over yours; and you were eager to own the better one I offered, were you not?”

Such is the story. Now consider the application of a part, a very small part, thereof.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.”

The man who would sell me a lamp did not disparage mine. He placed his greater light alongside my feebler flame, and I hastened to obtain the better.

The [members] of the Church of Jesus Christ today are sent forth, not to assail or ridicule the beliefs of man, but to set before the world a superior light, by which the smoky dimness of the flickering flames of man-made [works] shall be apparent. The work of the Church is constructive, not destructive.^{cxxv} 14

7. Teach students that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are, themselves, creative.

Many have noted the declining standards in artistic expression. Movie critic Michael Medved observed, “Everywhere around us, in every realm of artistic endeavor, we see evidence of the rejection of traditional standards of beauty and worth. In the visual arts, in literature, in film, in music of both popular and classical variety, ugliness has been enshrined as a new standard, as we accept the ability to shock as a replacement for the old ability to inspire.”^{cxxvi} 15

The Savior could step in and correct everything by Himself, but He chooses instead to help us in another way. “Behold, I am from above,” He declared, “and my power lieth beneath” (D&C 63:59). That is, He exercises His power through us. Elder Russell M. Nelson said, “The Master could overwhelm us with his supernal knowledge, but he does not. He honors our agency. He allows us the joy of discovery.”^{cxxvii}16

God’s creative ability never runs dry. He still has creative energy. He can inspire latter-day artists as well as He did ancient artists. The first verb in the Bible is *created*. God brought new light into the world, and so can we. “God gave you such extraordinary gifts; how could you possibly expect to have an ordinary life?” (from the movie *Little Women*, 1994). Artistic and creative works by those who have the companionship of the Holy Spirit can do what God’s creations do—please the eye and gladden the heart (see D&C 59:18).

All through history, God has raised up unique individuals at different times with specific artistic gifts to be a blessing and benefit to all mankind. These gifts came from God and, when perfected by the individual artisans, were called on by the Lord to further His purposes:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and *in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee.* (Exodus 31:1–6; emphasis added)

The invitation from God to become more creative, as well as an example of how God inspires and nurtures us in our creative abilities, is nowhere better illustrated than in the Book of Mormon. When the brother of Jared was commanded to build eight seaworthy vessels capable of carrying the Jaredites across the world to the promised land, he encountered problems he did not know how to solve—no light, no air, and no way to steer! He approached the Lord in prayer, wondering what to do next. The Lord told him how to modify the barges to get air and said that He personally would steer them with the winds and the waves. But when it came to the light, He asked the brother of Jared, “What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels? For behold, ye cannot have windows, for they will be dashed in pieces; neither shall ye take fire with you, for ye shall not go by the light of fire. . . . Therefore what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?” (Ether 2:23, 25).

The Lord—whose knowledge is infinite (2 Nephi 9:20), who comprehends all things (D&C 88:41), who sees the end from the beginning and everything in between (Abraham 2:8), whose intellect is keener than all mankind combined (Abraham 3:19)—asked the brother of Jared what *he* thought should be done. Can you imagine God asking you that question?

God could overwhelm us with His creativity and brilliance; instead, He graciously invites us to participate in the creative process. He not only extends us the invitation but also holds out the expectation that we will be “anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in [us]” (D&C 58:27–28).

Because we are His children, God has endowed us with a portion of His creative ability. He invites us to become “even as [He is]” (3 Nephi 27:27). That refers to the way as well as to the end result. He encourages us to “Do as I have done” (John 13:15) and “Come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). “Therefore,” the Savior said, “hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—*that which ye have seen me do*” (3 Nephi 18:24; emphasis added). He has reassured us that, with faith in Him, we can make great contributions: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do” (John 14:12). President Boyd K. Packer made the following request of Latter-day Saint artists: “Artists, don’t let your work become corrupted. Create beauty, follow the example of Jesus Christ. He was the ultimate creator.”^{cxxviii} 17

The brother of Jared exercised his agency, which resulted in his people being saved from a corrupt culture and being guided to a promised land with greater light than they could have had on their own: “And thus the Lord caused stones to shine in darkness, to give light unto men, women, and children, that they might not cross the great waters in darkness” (Ether 6:3). He has never left us without light!

8. Teach students to allow the Lord to enliven their creative gifts.

The Lord, who is the same yesterday and forever, can do the same for us, just as He did for the brother of Jared. Mankind is crossing the great deep in darkness, but the Lord is willing, even anxious, to cause our creative gifts to shine in darkness and to give light to every man, woman, and child. Help students understand that they can take their gifts and talents to the Lord and let Him touch them. He can take the works of our hands and enhance them so they will shine and “give light” to others. He can cause anything He touches to live, give light and life, and become a blessing! (see Ezekiel 47:9). And isn’t that, ultimately, what Latter-day Saint artists want to have happen with their creative works? Latter-day Saint artisans who desire their works to shine like a light must allow the “Light and Life of the World” to touch them.

Nephi had a similar experience. He learned that the works of our hands, touched by the Spirit of God, far exceed anything we can achieve on our own:

And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers [creative works] of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers [creative works] of the ship [my profession].

Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers [creative works] after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship [my profession] after the manner of men; but I did build it [my profession] after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore, it was not after the manner of men.

And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things.

And it came to pass that after I had finished the ship [profession], according to the word of the Lord, my brethren beheld that it was good, and that the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine. (1 Nephi 18:1–4)

The *word substitutions* help us see how we can approach God and receive His help in our professional pursuits, whether they be building ships, writing plays, sculpting, composing, performing, painting, speaking, and so forth.

9. Teach students that perspiration precedes inspiration.

The brother of Jared had to ponder deeply what to do. Similarly, today’s creative geniuses have to think deeply to discover inspired ideas. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “the things of God

are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. . . . How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart!”^{cxxxix}18

Great ideas sometimes come as sudden strokes of genius. But most often, those sudden flashes of inspiration are preceded by a lot of focused thought. God has promised He will inspire us with thoughts that occupy our minds and feelings that press themselves the strongest in our hearts (see D&C 8:2–3). This is the spirit of revelation. This is how revelations are received.

“Meditation,” President David O. McKay said, “is the language of the soul . . . consisting in deep, continued reflection. . . . Meditation is one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.”^{cxxx}19

William W. Phelps, a gifted poet and one of the most versatile hymn writers of this dispensation,^{cxxxi}20 learned firsthand the rewards of pondering spiritual things. While in Kirtland, Ohio, Phelps was living in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s home. It was at this time that Joseph asked Brother Phelps to assist in preparing an appropriate and reverential sacrament service for the soon-to-be-completed temple. Joseph observed to his friend that the setting for a sacrament service “called for a religious beauty.” Brother Phelps spent a lot of time walking alone and pondering the observance of the Lord’s Supper in this first temple of the Church. After deep meditation, Brother Phelps penned the sacred lines to “O God, the Eternal Father.” He continued to write with inspiration. Three of his hymns were sung at the dedicatory services for the Kirtland Temple, and one of them—“The Spirit of God”—has been sung at the dedication of every temple since. Today, fifteen of Brother Phelps’s hymns are in our present hymnal, several of which are Latter-day Saint favorites.

The brother of Jared also had to work hard. It was no easy task to “molten out of a rock sixteen small stones . . . [that] were white and clear, even as transparent as glass” (Ether 3:1).

Concerning the work involved in the creative process, President Boyd K. Packer noted, “LDS artists must earn inspiration, just as other artists have. . . . It doesn’t come just because artists are members of the LDS church, they still must work for it.”^{cxxxii}21

10. Teach students to turn to the scriptures for inspiration.

The brother of Jared turned to the scriptures for inspiration. Where would he have gotten the idea to prepare molten stones out of the mountain and ask God to touch them so they might give off light? We are never told precisely how the idea came to him, but it is interesting that the scriptures describe a similar episode when a man was commanded to build an ark to save his family. Noah was told to build an ark with a lower, second, and third story. How would the lower two stories get light? The Lord answered Noah and told him, “A window shalt thou make to the ark” (Genesis 6:16). The footnote in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible for the word *window* in this verse indicates that it is translated from the Hebrew word *tsohar* (meaning “shiner,” “illuminator,” “bright as noonday light”) and that some rabbis believed it was a precious stone that shone in the ark (see Genesis 6:16, footnote *a*).^{cxxxiii}22 Could it be that the Lord did not answer the brother of Jared’s question about how to provide light in his barges because He had already revealed the answer to that question to Noah and that the answer could be found in the scriptures?

Regarding the importance of scripture study, Elder McConkie testified: “I think that people who study the scriptures get a dimension to their life that nobody else gets and that can’t be gained in any way except by studying the scriptures. There’s an increase in faith and a desire to do what’s right and a feeling of inspiration and understanding that comes to people who study the

gospel—meaning particularly the Standard Works—and who ponder the principles, that can't come in any other way.”^{cxxxiv}23

Students need to know they can turn to the scriptures to find answers to life's challenges and problems. Pondering the word of the Lord has been a source of inspiration to many. From Handel's *Messiah* to Michelangelo's *Moses*, the scriptures have inspired some of the world's most magnificent works of art.

11. Teach students to be worthy to receive inspiration.

The brother of Jared's personal righteousness was so great that he literally drew the Lord through the veil.^{cxxxv}24 He “could not be kept from beholding within the veil. . . . He could not be kept from within the veil” (Ether 3:19–20). The Lord said to him, “Because of thy faith thou hast seen . . . and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast” (Ether 3:9). And when he wrote the things he saw, they were filled with power, as Moroni noted in a prayer to God: “Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them” (Ether 12:24).

Elder M. Russell Ballard wisely counseled, “If we are going to fill the world with goodness and truth, then we must be worthy to receive inspiration so we can bless the lives of our Heavenly Father's children.”^{cxxxvi}25

Students need to be taught that they can pray for this kind of inspiration and help. The words that appear most often throughout the brother of Jared's story are “cried unto the Lord,” “called upon the name of the Lord,” and so forth (see Ether 2–3). Prayer plays a critical role in receiving divine help with creative works. Expressing appreciation in prayer, giving frank recognition of God's hand in our gifts, and voicing gratitude for His help bring tremendous blessings: “Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear; for my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite” (D&C 136:32–33).

Moses observed, “It was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration” (Moses 6:5). Elder Orson F. Whitney learned this valuable lesson about the immediacy of prayer while serving as editor of the *Millennial Star* in Liverpool, England:

I found myself in an overworked, run-down condition, manifesting a decided lack of physical and mental vigor. . . . One morning I was endeavoring to write the usual editorial, but could make no headway, and wore out the whole day in a vain attempt to produce something worth reading. At last I threw down my pen and burst into tears of vexation.

Just then the Good Spirit whispered: “Why don't you pray? . . .

I was praying five times a day—secret prayers, morning, noon and night; and vocal prayers, with the rest of the household, at breakfast and dinner time. “I do pray—why can't I get some help?” I asked, almost petulantly, for I was heartsick and half-discouraged.

“Pray now,” said the Spirit, “and ask for what you want.”

I saw the point. It was a special not a general prayer that was needed. I knelt and sobbed out a few simple words. I did not pray for the return of the Ten Tribes nor for the building of the New Jerusalem. I asked the Lord in the name of Jesus Christ to help me write. . . . I then arose, seated myself, and began to write. . . .

All I needed came as fast as I could set it down—every thought, every word in place. In a short time the article was completed to my entire satisfaction.^{cxxxvii}26

12. Teach students that their works can rise above the mediocre.

The brother of Jared took his creation to the Lord and asked Him to touch it. Numerous other artists have done the same. Elder Ballard said:

God's purpose for the artist is to inspire, to give us visions of ourselves that we might not otherwise see, to make us better than we would have been. The world is better for the arts and righteous artists in it. . . .

With so many choices for viewers and listeners, the artistic works of the Latter-day Saint not only need to be uplifting, they must be excellent, to set them apart from the worldly and the mediocre. People deserve alternatives of quality, the kind that Latter-day Saints are capable of providing through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

We call upon all members, those in the arts and those seeking to appreciate the message of good art, to expand their vision of what can be done.^{cxxxviii}27

In 1977, President Kimball looked through a window into the future and invited us to gaze at the possibilities of creating uplifting and excellent works that are set apart from the mediocre and the worldly:

In our world, there have risen brilliant stars in drama, music, literature, sculpture, painting, science, and all the graces. For long years I have had a vision of members of the Church greatly increasing their already strong positions of excellence till the eyes of all the world will be upon us. . . .

We are proud of the artistic heritage that the Church has brought to us from its earliest beginnings, but the full story of Mormonism has never yet been written nor painted nor sculpted nor spoken. It remains for inspired hearts and talented fingers *yet* to reveal themselves. They must be faithful, inspired, active Church members to give life and feeling and true perspective to a subject so worthy. Such masterpieces should run for months in every movie center, cover every part of the globe in the tongues of the people, written by great artists, purified by the best critics.

Our writers, our motion picture specialists, with the inspiration of heaven, should tomorrow be able to produce a masterpiece which would live forever. Our own talent, obsessed with dynamism from a CAUSE, could put into such a story life and heartbeats and emotions and love and pathos, drama, suffering, fear, courage; and they could put into it the great leader, the mighty modern Moses who led a people farther than from Egypt to Jericho, who knew miracles as great as the stream from the rock at Horeb, manna in the desert, giant grapes, rain when needed, battles won against great odds.^{cxxxix}28

Conclusion

Many Latter-day Saints have used their gifts and talents to make creative contributions in the world. But this is *our day* in the history of the kingdom of God on the earth. Now it is our turn to go forward with faith and build up an artistic culture worthy of the title of "Zion." This can be done only with heaven's help and only if we are willing to take our gifts to the Lord and let His Spirit touch them, "that they may shine forth in [the] darkness" (Ether 3:4).

The Prophet Joseph Smith prayed at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple that one day a Zion environment would be created in which the Savior would be pleased to dwell. He also prayed that the Saints would ready themselves, and the world around them, for that day: "Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connections, . . . that the

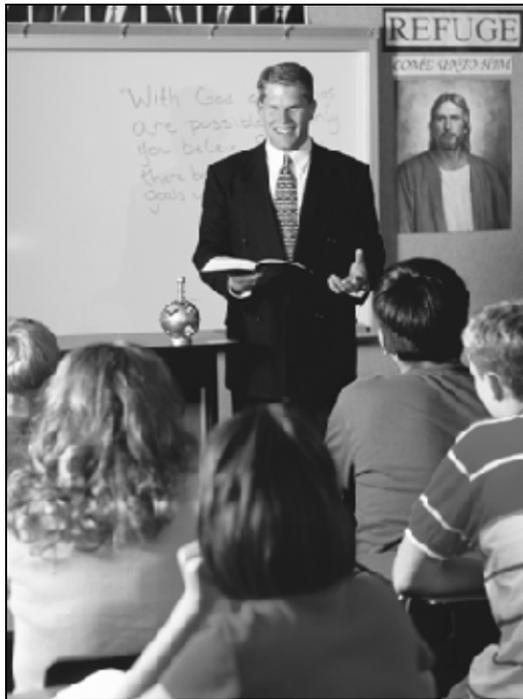
kingdom, which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth; that thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; and be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, . . . that thy glory may fill the earth” (D&C 109:72–74).

As members of the Church, we declare, “We believe . . . that Zion . . . will be *built*” (tenth article of faith; emphasis added). May we, as teachers, be inspired to know what to say and how to say it so that our students will be filled with the desire to create and compose those things that will take us all to a higher level.

Notes

1. Richard Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, eds., *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 132.
2. “Obligation to Move Forth Church and the Kingdom of God: President Hinckley Continues Rapid Pace,” *Church News*, 14 February 1998, 4.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 34.
4. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 234.
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 56; emphasis in original.
6. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1875), 17:369. 7. Boyd K. Packer, “The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord,” *That All May Be Edified* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 285.
8. Hugh W. Nibley, *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978), 302.
9. Victor L. Ludlow, “Covenant Teachings of the Scriptures,” BYU Devotional Address, 13 October 1998, 9–10.
10. Mission Presidents’ Seminar, Missionary Training Center, Provo, Utah, June 1999; notes in possession of author.
11. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1881), 21:375.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 17.
13. See, for example, “Community Service—Teachings of the Prophets and Apostles,” *Ensign*, February 1999, 13–29.
14. *The Parables of Elder James E. Talmage*, comp. Albert L. Zobell Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 3–6.
15. Michael Medved, “Popular Culture and the War against Standards,” *Imprimis*, February 1991, 1–7.
16. Russell M. Nelson, “Gratitude for the Mission and Ministry of Jesus Christ,” BYU Education Week Devotional Address, *BYU Speeches*, 1997–98 (Provo, Utah: BYU Publications and Graphics, 1998), 18 August 1998, 349.
17. Boyd K. Packer, “Art Is Uplifting, Packer Says,” *Daily Universe*, 2 October 1998, 4.
18. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 137.
19. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, April 1967, 85.
20. Thirty-one of the ninety hymns in the first LDS hymnal (1835) were penned by Phelps. Fifteen of the hymns in the current hymnal are by Phelps—more than by any other poet.

21. “Art Is Uplifting,” 4.
22. See also Hugh Nibley, “An Approach to the Book of Mormon,” *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Volume 6, The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1988), 348–49.
23. Bruce R. McConkie, in David Croft, “Spare Time’s Rare to Apostle,” *Church News*, 24 January 1976, 4.
24. See Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 23–24.
25. M. Russell Ballard, “Filling the World with Goodness and Truth,” *Ensign*, July 1996, 14.
26. Orson F. Whitney, *Through Memory’s Halls: The Life Story of Orson F. Whitney* (Independence, Missouri: Zion’s Printing and Publishing, 1930), 151–52; cited in Jack M. Lyon, Linda Ririe Gundry, and Jay A. Parry, eds., *Best-Loved Stories of the LDS People* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 215.
27. Ballard, “Filling the World with Goodness and Truth,” 10, 13, 14.
28. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Gospel Vision of the Arts,” *Ensign*, July 1977, 3, 5.



Church Educational System teachers should heed this wise counsel:
 “Your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

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The Focus of Teaching: Principles and Doctrines

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