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This issue contains contributions from the faculty of the Church’s Seminaries and Institutes programs as well as Elder M. Russell Ballard’s address to S&I faculty given in February 2016. We dedicate one issue each year to our colleagues teaching high school students as well as to the faculty who teach in college- and university-associated institute programs. The inclusion of Elder Ballard’s remarks signals a call for all of us to engage history more deeply and carefully as we try to help our students navigate the difficulties of our age. Elder Ballard’s remarks serve as a timely reminder to seek out the “best books,” to consult the eleven Gospel Topics Essays on LDS.org, and to pay the price to learn our history.

In this issue we offer the third of our difficult topics interviews, and here we present an interview with Paul Reeve on the issue of race. Paul is an expert on the topic and has written several thoughtful and deeply interesting books and articles on the topic of the Church’s ban on the priesthood as well as the issue of race in scripture. I have attempted to steer the conversation towards the classroom in an effort to help all of us find appropriate language to discuss this difficult topic. We hope to continue presenting these essays in future issues of the journal, and I welcome your suggestions for topics that might be covered.

Finally, I draw your attention to a brief article on the topic of doing Mormon history. D. Brent Smith offers a broad survey of the Mormon History Association (MHA) and how it has engaged and shaped the conversation regarding what it means to be a Mormon historian. For some readers, this information will open up new opportunities to access and present current research. The MHA is a vibrant and growing organization that welcomes scholars of all stripes and backgrounds. The MHA meets annually, and past meetings have proved to be a fruitful venue for discovering what new research is being done and what new publications have appeared in the past year. I hope you find this essay helpful, as I did, and that you enjoy the other insightful essays of this issue.

Thomas A. Wayment
Editor-in-chief
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By Study and by Faith

ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD
OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

From an address to CES religious educators on 26 February 2016 in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

In a General Authority training meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said regarding the teaching of Church doctrine: “We cannot be too careful. We must watch that we do not get off [course]. In our efforts to be original and fresh and different, we may teach things which may not be entirely in harmony with the basic doctrines of this the restored Church of Jesus Christ. . . . We had better be more alert. . . . We must be watchmen on the tower.”1

As Church education moves forward in the 21st century, our educators need to consider any changes they should make in the way they prepare to teach, how they teach, and what they teach if they are to build unwavering faith in the lives of our precious youth.

Gone are the days when a student asked an honest question and a teacher responded, “Don’t worry about it!” Gone are the days when a student raised a sincere concern and a teacher bore his or her testimony as a response intended to avoid the issue. Gone are the days when students were protected from people who attacked the Church.
Fortunately, the Lord has provided this timely and timeless counsel to teachers: “And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

This is especially applicable today because not all of our students have the faith necessary to face the challenges ahead and because many of them are already exposed through the Internet to corrosive forces of an increasingly secular world that is hostile to faith, family, and gospel standards. The Internet is expanding its reach across the world into almost every home and into the hands and minds of our students.

You can help students by teaching them what it means to combine study and faith as they learn. Teach them by modeling this skill and approach in class.

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) observed:

“We would remind you that the acquiring of knowledge by faith is no easy road to learning. It demands strenuous effort and a continual striving by faith….

“Learning by faith is no task for a lazy man [or woman]. Someone has said, in effect, that such a process requires the bending of the whole soul, the calling up from the depths of the human mind and linking it with God—the right connection must be formed. Then only comes ‘knowledge by faith.’”

Knowledge by faith will produce a pure testimony, and a pure testimony has the power to change lives, as illustrated in the following brief stories.

Three Stories

Phoebe Carter left her home in Maine, USA, to gather with the Saints in Ohio in the 1830s. She recalled, “My friends marveled at my course, as did I, but something within impelled me on. My mother’s grief at my leaving home was almost more than I could bear; and had it not been for the spirit within I should have faltered at the last.”

Phoebe followed the Prophet Joseph Smith and gathered with the Saints in Ohio and later in Utah, where she died a faithful Latter-day Saint and equally yoked as the wife of Church President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98).

As a college student, Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) had decided he could not serve a mission because of his family’s financial situation. On one occasion, however, he heard Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1959) speak. A biography notes, “Little did [Marion] know that the course of his life, in one very short moment, was about to be completely changed.”

The story continues: “For the first time Marion . . . fully understood what it was [like] to be under the influence of inspiration. A piercing, tingling sensation filled his soul. He . . . never had been so touched as he was now, listening to the words of this newest of the Apostles. . . .

“The glow of the Apostle’s countenance and the sincerity of [his] testimony filled him with an irresistible desire to go on a mission…. He knew that his plans for further education must be postponed.”

Soon, Marion was on his way to Australia, where he served faithfully. Later he became a mighty Apostle and a member of the First Presidency.

The final story comes from President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, about the impact of an aged teacher on William E. Berrett. The teacher, a convert from Norway, had imperfect English-language skills. Despite the teacher’s limitations, President Packer recalled, Brother Berrett testified of his teacher, “We could warm our hands by the fire of his faith.”

Later, William became the head of seminaries, institutes, and Church schools.

For Phoebe, Marion, and William, hearing a pure testimony became the catalyst that changed their lives forever. The same can be true for those you teach. However, given the realities of today’s world, pure testimony may not always be enough. Phoebe, Marion, and William were clean and pure and free from pornography and worldliness as they sat at the feet of inspired missionaries, teachers, and leaders. The Spirit easily penetrated their soft and pure hearts.

Today the story is much different. Some of your students are already infected by pornography and worldliness before they ever reach your classes.

It was only a generation ago that our young people’s access to information about our history, doctrine, and practices was basically limited to materials printed by the Church. Few students came in contact with alternative interpretations. Mostly, our young people lived a sheltered life.

Our curriculum at that time, though well-meaning, did not prepare students for today—a day when they have instant access to virtually everything about the Church from every possible point of view. Today what they see on their mobile devices is likely to be faith challenging as much as faith promoting. Many of our young people are more familiar with Google than with the
gospel, more attuned to the Internet than to inspiration, and more involved with Facebook than with faith.

**Doctrinal Mastery**

In light of these challenges, the Church Board of Education recently approved an initiative in seminary called Doctrinal Mastery. Building on what already has been done in Scripture Mastery, this new initiative focuses on building and strengthening our students’ faith in Jesus Christ and fortifying them with increased ability to live and apply the gospel in their lives. Drawing on the scriptures and the words of the prophets, they will learn how to act with faith in Christ to acquire spiritual knowledge and understanding of His gospel. And they will have opportunities to learn how to apply the doctrine of Christ and gospel principles to the questions and challenges they hear and see every day among their peers and on social media.

This initiative is inspired and timely. It will have a wonderful influence on our young people. However, the success of Doctrinal Mastery, and of all the other programs of study in the Church Educational System, will depend to an important extent upon our teachers.

In the face of these challenges, what are the opportunities and responsibilities gospel teachers have in the 21st century? Obviously you teachers must love the Lord, His Church, and your students. You must also bear pure testimony sincerely and often. Additionally, more than at any time in our history, your students also need to be blessed by learning doctrinal and historical content and context by study and by faith accompanied by pure testimony so they can experience a mature and lasting conversion to the gospel and a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ. Mature and lasting conversion means they will “stay in the boat and hold on” throughout their entire lives.6

For you to understand the doctrinal and historical content and context of the scriptures and our history, you will need to study from the “best books,” as the Lord has directed (D&C 88:118). The “best books” include the scriptures, the teachings of modern prophets and apostles, and the best LDS scholarship available. Through your diligent efforts to learn by study and by faith, you will be able to help your students learn the skills and attitudes necessary to distinguish between reliable information that will lift them up and the half-truths and incorrect interpretations of doctrine, history, and practices that will bring them down.

Teach them about the challenges they face when relying upon the Internet to answer questions of eternal significance. Remind them that James did not say, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him Googlet” (see James 1:5).

Wise people do not rely on the Internet to diagnose and treat emotional, mental, and physical health challenges, especially life-threatening challenges. Instead, they seek out health experts, those trained and licensed by recognized medical and state boards. Even then, prudent people seek a second opinion.

If that is the sensible course to take in finding answers for emotional, mental, and physical health issues, it is even more so when eternal life is at stake. When something has the potential to threaten our spiritual life, our most precious family relationships, and our membership in the kingdom, we should find thoughtful and faithful Church leaders to help us. And, if necessary, we should ask those with appropriate academic training, experience, and expertise for help.

This is exactly what I do when I need an answer to my own questions that I cannot answer myself. I seek help from my Brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve and from others with expertise in fields of Church history and doctrine.

Gospel teachers should be among the first—outside students’ own families—to introduce authoritative sources on topics that may be less well-known or controversial so that students will measure whatever they hear or read later against what they have already been taught.

**Spiritual Inoculation**

We give medical inoculations to our precious missionaries before sending them into the mission field so they will be protected against diseases that can harm them. In a similar fashion, before you send your students into the world, inoculate them by providing faithful, thoughtful, and accurate interpretation of gospel doctrine, the scriptures, our history, and those topics that are sometimes misunderstood.

To name a few such topics that are less known or controversial, I’m talking about plural marriage, seer stones, different accounts of the First Vision, the process of translation of the Book of Mormon or the Book of Abraham, gender issues, race and the priesthood, and a Heavenly Mother.

The efforts to inoculate our young people will often fall to Church Educational System teachers. With those thoughts in mind, find time to think about your opportunities and your responsibilities.
Church leaders today are fully conscious of the unlimited access to information, and we are making extraordinary efforts to provide accurate context and understanding of the teachings of the Restoration. A prime example of this effort is the 11 Gospel Topics essays on LDS.org that provide balanced and reliable interpretations of the facts for controversial and unfamiliar Church-related subjects.

It is important that you know the content of these essays. If you have questions about them, please ask someone who has studied them and understands them. In other words, “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) as you master the content of these essays.

You should also become familiar with the Joseph Smith Papers website, the Church history section on LDS.org, and other resources by faithful LDS scholars.

The effort for gospel transparency and spiritual inoculation through a thoughtful study of doctrine and history, coupled with a burning testimony, is the best antidote we have to help students avoid and deal with questions, doubt, or faith crises they may face in this information age.

As you teachers pay the price to better understand our history, doctrine, and practices—better than you do now—you will be prepared to provide thoughtful, careful, and inspired answers to your students’ questions.

One way to know what questions your students have is to listen attentively to them. All good teachers must be good listeners. In addition to listening to your students, encourage them in class or in private to ask you questions about any topic. One of the most important questions your students may ask is “Why?” When asked with a sincere desire to understand, “Why?” is a great question. It is the question missionaries want their investigators to ask. Why are we here? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why should we pray? Why should we follow Christ? Often the why questions lead to inspiration and revelation. Knowing our Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation will help you answer most of the why questions.

Here is one final note about answering questions. It is important to teach your students that although the gospel provides many, if not most, answers to life’s most important questions, some questions cannot be answered in mortality because we lack the information needed for a proper answer. As we learn in Jacob: “Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him” (Jacob 4:8; see also D&C 101:32–34).

A Word of Caution

Now I offer a word of caution. Please recognize that you may come to believe, as many of your students do, that you are a scriptural, doctrinal, and history expert. A recent study revealed that “the more people think they know about a topic, the more likely they are to allege understanding beyond what they know, even to the point of feigning knowledge . . . and fabricating information.”

Identified as overclaiming, this temptation must be avoided by our gospel teachers. It is perfectly all right to say, “I do not know.” However, once that is said, you have a responsibility to find the best answers to thoughtful questions your students ask (see D&C 101:32–34).

As you teach your students and respond to their questions, let me warn you not to pass along faith-promoting or unsubstantiated rumors or outdated understandings and explanations of our doctrine and practices from the past. It is always wise to make it a practice to study the words of the living prophets and apostles; keep updated on current Church issues, policies, and statements through mormonnewsroom.org and LDS.org; and consult the works of recognized, thoughtful, and faithful LDS scholars to ensure you do not teach things that are untrue, out of date, or odd and quirky.

The authors of the overclaiming study noted that “a tendency to overclaim, especially in self-perceived experts, . . . may discourage individuals from educating themselves in precisely those areas in which they consider themselves knowledgeable.”

In addition to becoming lifelong learners, you must also be doing those things in your personal life that allow the Holy Spirit to work within you. Such things include sincere daily prayer; faithful fasting; regular study and pondering of the scriptures and the words of the living prophets; making the Sabbath day a delight; partaking of the sacrament with humility and always remembering the Savior; worshipping in the temple as often as possible; and, finally, reaching out to the needy, poor, and lonely—both those close by and across the world.

To properly fulfill your opportunities and responsibilities, you must practice what you preach!
Be courageous by seeking counsel and correction from those you trust: a spouse, priesthood leaders, or supervisors. Ask them where you can improve in your personal discipleship. Avoid anything that drives away the Spirit.

Additionally, may I suggest that you hold a personal interview with yourself on occasion and review 2 Nephi 26:29–32, Alma 5:14–30, and Doctrine and Covenants 121:33–46? Doing so will help you identify the kinds of temptations we all may face. If something needs to change in your life, then resolve to fix it.

Avoid the temptation to question the motives of your co-laborers. Instead, look deeply into your own heart and search your own desires and motives. Only then can the Savior change your heart and align your desires and motives with His.

The rising generation needs to know, understand, embrace, and participate in God’s plan of salvation. Understanding the plan will give them the divine insight through which to view themselves as sons and daughters of God, which provides a lens to understand almost every doctrine, practice, and policy of the Church.

Teachers of the gospel today need to accept the opportunity and the responsibility to teach the 21st century’s young people correct principles about the plan, including the divinely sanctioned doctrine of marriage and the role of the family as defined in the proclamation on the family.

The doctrine of eternal marriage and family is a crucial part of God’s plan of happiness. It includes our own temple-sealed families as part of Heavenly Father’s own eternal family in the celestial kingdom. Because this doctrine relates directly to His own family and to His own spirit children, we are taught in Genesis that “male and female created he them” and that He commanded Father Adam and Mother Eve to “multiply, and replenish the earth” (see Genesis 1:27–28).

It has been said that the plan of happiness begins and ends with family. Indeed, family began in the premortal world, where we lived as members of our heavenly parents’ family. And in the end, familial commitments and loving relationships will not only continue to exist but also proliferate through the process of procreation (see D&C 131:1–4; 132:19).

The hinge point that connects it all—on which God’s plan and our eternal destiny depend and on which all else pivots—is our Savior, Jesus Christ.

His atoning sacrifice makes all things possible, including but not limited to a loving, caring, and eternal marriage and family.

The Lord teaches us that no single person, regardless of his or her righteousness, can obtain all our Heavenly Father has for His children. A single individual is half of the equation, unable to dwell in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom (see 1 Corinthians 11:11; D&C 131:1–4).

Your students need to understand that the purpose of mortality is to become more like God by gaining physical bodies, exercising agency, and assuming roles that previously belonged only to heavenly parents—roles of husband, wife, and parent.

The prophets have assured that all those who are worthy and who rely upon Jesus Christ but have not been able to be sealed to a companion or have children in this life will have those opportunities in the world to come.

Teach young people that in the Lord’s Church there is room for all to worship, serve, and grow together as brothers and sisters in the gospel. Remind them what Lehi taught—that God’s goal and hope for all of His children can be summed up as follows: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

Heavenly Father wants us to accept His definition of marriage and obey His first commandment to “multiply, and replenish” (Genesis 1:28)—not only to fulfill His plan but also to find the joy that His plan was designed to give His sons and daughters.

As Church educators, help our youth to have a clear understanding of God’s plan of happiness wherein real joy comes to His children. Help them to know it, embrace it, participate in it, and defend it. From my forty years of experience as a General Authority, I am concerned about the large number of our Church members, younger and older, who simply do not understand the plan for their eternal and divine destiny.

So, my fellow teachers, we should look for and relish these opportunities to explain, doctrinally and spiritually, why we believe that knowledge of God’s great plan of happiness will answer most of the “why” questions we may be asked. Expressing our belief in a premortal life where we lived as the spirit children of a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother allows us to explain why this earth was created. One essential purpose of mortal life is that we can replicate that family experience ourselves, only this time as parents rather than just as children. Treasure your basic understanding of the doctrine.
and purpose of our Heavenly Father’s plan for our eternal happiness. And continue to teach it.

Conclusion
So, to conclude and to summarize, the points I have shared with you are:

- Teach students to combine learning by study and faith with pure testimony.
- Teach students to stay in the boat and hang on!
- Teach students to control their mobile devices and focus on being connected more to the Holy Spirit than to the Internet.
- Inoculate students with the truths of the plan of salvation found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Remember that “Why?” can be a great question that leads to gospel understanding.
- Master the content of the Gospel Topics essays.
- Don’t overclaim, and don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know.”
- Become lifelong learners.
- Seek counsel and correction from those you trust.
- Consider holding a personal interview occasionally to review your spiritual preparation, your diligence, and your effectiveness.
- Teach that the plan of happiness begins and ends with family. Keep the plan of salvation in mind at all times.
- Teach that marriage and family bring long-lasting joy.

Remember, combining learning by study, by faith, and by pure testimony brings about true and long lasting conversion. Above all else, strong faith in the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is essential for our spiritual strength and growth.

May you find the joy and the peace that come from knowing that through your teaching, you have touched a life and lifted one of Heavenly Father’s children on the journey back to His presence.

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Although being knowledgeable about a certain topic is useful, literacy is more than that. Literacy is about how we learn.

Developing Scripture Literacy: What Good Scripture Readers Know and Do

ERIC D. RACKLEY

Eric D. Rackley (eric.rackley@byuh.edu) is an assistant professor of education at Brigham Young University–Hawaii.

This article identifies ten practices that can improve youths’ abilities to make sense of scripture in ways that get them underneath the words to the principles and doctrine that they so desperately need but may struggle to understand. These ten scripture reading practices are based on decades of reading research and empirical work that examine Latter-day Saint youths’ literacy practices and the motivations that drive them. I also include examples, where appropriate, from a two-year ethnographic study of Latter-day Saint youths’ experiences with scripture literacy.

Being familiar with what good scripture readers know and do can give teachers and parents a clearer understanding of the knowledge and skills that youth should develop in order to understand the truths in scripture. When this familiarity occurs, we are better positioned to develop instructional practices that can support young people’s strategic use of meaning-making tools that can enhance their scripture literacy. Youth can also benefit from some clarity about how to read scripture, because this knowledge can demystify what should happen when they crack open their Bibles or tap their scripture apps. Additionally, having a clearer view of what good scripture readers know...
and do can draw much needed attention to the processes that youth use to make meaning of scripture, which can complement and considerably enhance the focus we have traditionally placed on the content of scripture.

In what follows, I articulate a conception of literacy as the work that we do to construct meaning, and scripture literacy as a special type of meaning-making that attends to the knowledge and faith development associated with sacred texts. I then identify ten practices of good scripture readers and make a case for the practices’ importance in developing scripture literacy.

Literacy
We hear a great deal about literacy: mechanical literacy, mathematical literacy, computer literacy, and historical literacy. But what do these phrases really mean? The way they are used can suggest that literacy is knowing about fields of study, such as history or math, or knowing about objects, such as computers or cars. Although being knowledgeable about a certain topic is useful, literacy is more than that. Literacy is about *how* we learn. Specifically, literacy can be understood as the process of constructing and producing knowledge. In this article, I conceptualize literacy as the mental, emotional, and spiritual work required to make sense of texts. This can include reading, talking, thinking, and even feeling, all of which come bundled together to broaden and deepen traditional views of literacy as simply knowing a lot about something.

If we consider literacy as the way we construct meaning, literacy employs a number of different approaches that we learn to use skillfully through socialization or culturally informed practice. Because there are many different cultures, there are many different ways to make meaning, even of the same text. As such, there are many ways to be literate. We might, therefore, profitably view literacy as a family of meaning-making practices, rather than as a single, monolithic skill we call reading. It may be disingenuous to talk about the “best” way to read a text and more honest to talk about the variety of ways we might construct knowledge from texts. Clearly, literacy is an important tool for text-based learning. If youth are to learn from texts—including scripture—then they must be able to unlock them. Moreover, if youth struggle constructing knowledge from scripture, then they are limited in what they can understand from it, which unduly narrows how they apply it to their lives. Living the truths in scripture starts with being able to learn them. And that means developing literacy.

Scripture Literacy
Scripture is clearly important. It can bring us to “rejoice in Jesus Christ [our] Redeemer” (Alma 37:9), convince us of the error of our ways, enlarge our memories, and bring about “the salvation of [our] souls” (Alma 37:8). Given the importance of scripture, without seriously studying it we may become as the Lamanites of old who suffered “in ignorance . . . not knowing the mysteries of God” (Mosiah 1:3) and dwindled in unbelief until they “[knew] nothing concerning” the Lord (Mosiah 1:5). Elder D. Todd Christofferson addressed a modern-day dwindling when he cautioned against “a growing scripture illiteracy” that has resulted in many of us forgetting truths about God and Christ that previous generations knew. One way to address the current scripture illiteracy is to not only return to scripture but return to it more faithfully, purposefully, and skillfully. As Elder Christofferson said, “Our need for constant recourse to the scriptures is greater [now] than in any previous time.”

Elder Richard G. Scott said, “Feasting on the word of God each day is more important than sleep, school, work, television shows, video games, or social media.” The words Elders Christofferson and Scott use to talk about reading scripture are important. “Recourse” and “feasting” are process words that hint at *how* we should read scripture, not simply *that* we should read it. Specifically, we should be returning, even running, back to scripture constantly (recourse) and indulging ourselves in scripture study every day (feasting). Both of these words suggest more than simply saying the words and hoping that they stick in our minds. To develop scripture literacy, we might think of engaging in the difficult but rewarding work that is necessary to translate the ideas on the pages of scripture into something meaningful, powerful, and beautiful in our lives.

Scripture literacy is a special type of literacy focused on the ways that we make sense of sacred texts to develop our understanding of religious principles and to deepen our faith. This will differ from one context to another, based on the ideologies, traditions, and practices valued in those contexts, whether they are across faiths, within a faith, or within a single congregation. In one congregation, for example, Relief Society sisters may value exactly what scripture says, so they might practice memorizing important verses word for word. In the same congregation, the young men could value the ability to retell scripture narratives in ways that make them approachable and meaningful for other youth, so they might spend their time learning the stories and practicing retelling them. In Sunday School, it could be important for youth...
Developing Scripture Literacy: What Good Scripture Readers Know and Do

Developing Scripture Literacy

The following ten practices of good scripture readers are by no means inclusive of all of the things that effective scripture readers should know and do. And there is no particular importance in their order. However, they constitute an important starting point for beginning a conversation about what it means to develop scripture literacy in the Church. Moreover, the following ten practices can offer teachers and parents insights for explaining and clarifying the scripture reading processes for youth.

Practice 1: Understand Scripture Reading as a Problem-Solving Process

Struggling scripture readers often assume if they read every word, then they will understand a passage. Good scripture readers know reading is more than just saying the words. It is about getting to the principles, knowledge, and insights that the words can represent when they are strung together. However, to get to the ideas buried beneath the words involves hard work that often revolves around solving problems. As such, good readers understand that reading scripture is often about solving problems. Good readers do not assume they will read an entire chapter without any trouble. They expect to encounter unfamiliar words, complex sentence structures, abstract concepts, confusing syntax, nuanced character relationships, and a host of other problems as they read.

Indeed, good readers count on scripture to give them problems because they understand scripture is rich and complex and that as they read scripture they must constantly solve a variety of problems if they hope to get everything they can out of each chapter and verse. Anticipating reading problems prepares good readers to handle them when they arise. Good scripture readers do not get thrown off course or give up when troubles come. Troubles will always come. But good scripture readers engage the problems skillfully and eagerly—because they have prepared for them—perhaps in the same spirit with which David readied himself and “hasted, and ran” to meet Goliath (1 Samuel 17:48).

Practice 2: Monitor Thoughts and Feelings

Good readers understand that their minds and emotions must be active during the reading process and that the heart and mind are what drive their understanding of scripture. Good readers recognize that they are thinking and feeling things as they read. For example, good scripture readers may read 3 Nephi 11 and wonder what it might be like to see the Savior come down from heaven, or how it might feel to hear his voice, or they might be picturing the looks on people’s faces and trying to imagine the feelings in those people’s hearts. In addition to recognizing that they are thinking and feeling as they read, good scripture readers can also control those thoughts and feelings to keep them focused on constructing meaning. To control their thoughts and feelings, good scripture readers must decide which thoughts to tuck away and come back to later, which ones to focus on to keep their hearts and minds in the chapter, and which ones to ignore because they are distracting them from understanding what they are reading.

When students cannot monitor their hearts and minds, their words, ideas, and even feelings can mush together into an unrecognizable lump. A student may read every word in 3 Nephi 11, only to find that when he gets to the end of the chapter, he cannot remember what he just read and may have only the vaguest impression that is was about Jesus. This is a common problem for readers who cannot pay attention to their mental and emotional experiences with scripture. Fortunately, this can be addressed by helping scripture readers...
develop the ability to recognize and manage their thoughts and feelings during the reading process.

**Practice 3: Recognize and Tolerate Confusion**

Because good readers monitor their thoughts and feelings, they recognize when they are confused because they realize when a passage stops making sense. When asked, good scripture readers can pinpoint exactly where they began to get confused. As I was listening to a young Latter-day Saint woman read Alma 32, she stopped and said, “Well, I am confused.” Then she explained in great detail her confusion about the difference between being humble and being compelled to be humble. She concluded her explanation confessing, “I don’t understand what he is saying.” Interestingly, this young woman did not accept unwarranted solutions to her confusion simply because they were easily available or because she needed them to give her uncertainty a nice, although unsatisfying, conclusion.

In addition to recognizing confusion, good readers also tolerate confusion. This means that they do not give up when things get tough. Good readers can wallow in ambiguity without losing hope because they have learned to hold the confusion in their minds until things become clearer. About five minutes after she expressed her confusion about the “being humble” phrase, the same young woman said, “Oh! He says that he doesn’t mean that everyone was sort of pushed into humbling themselves, but he thinks that there are some people . . . that would have humbled themselves no matter what the circumstances.” Because she recognized and tolerated her confusion, this young woman found her way through a complex piece of scripture, demonstrating that good readers understand that confusion is simply part of the experience of reading difficult texts.

**Practice 4: Reread**

Many young readers think rereading is a form of cheating or at least a waste of time. They tend to believe they should be able to read a text once, understand it, and then move on to the next one. I find myself falling into this trap on occasion, believing that I can understand complex new ideas on a single read because of my background knowledge, reading experience, and knowledge of the reading process. For the most part, I am wrong, and have to go back and reread. Given the complexity of scripture, single-shot reading has very little value for developing gospel knowledge and testimony. Can you imagine rereading helps readers gain conceptual and narrative coherence.
trying to understand scripture by reading each passage once, and only once? Of all the things that good scripture readers do, rereading is probably the most undervalued—but potentially the most powerful.

Rereading helps readers gain conceptual and narrative coherence by giving them the time and opportunity to reexamine big ideas or principles in the passage they are trying to understand. Rereading also gives them time to think and feel. For example, in a recent reading demonstration for a group of teachers in the Church, I found myself rereading the first few lines of 3 Nephi 11 at least five times in different ways, at different speeds, attending to different words to orient myself to the chapter and find my way into it. I felt like I needed that time to process the lines and give me a sense of where the chapter might be going.

As young readers reread words, phrases, verses, or longer passages, they can revisit places, stories, and doctrine in chunks that are just the right size for them. Rereading is like putting a magnifying glass on the specific parts of scripture that are unclear. And just like a magnifying glass, rereading can bring into focus what our youth need to see by helping them view the fuzzy parts more clearly. When reading complex texts, most experienced readers reread constantly, often unconsciously, and for a variety of purposes. Certainly, rereading takes a little more time, but good scripture readers are willing to put in the time because they know it is necessary if they hope to understand and apply what they read. As John Hilton suggests, if we want to move from reading scripture to feasting on scripture, we should follow The Three Rs: “Read the chapter once. Read the same chapter a second time. Read it again!”

Practice 5: Understand Text Structures

Good readers understand that scripture passages often have a primary structure and a few secondary structures within them. Possible structures include compare and contrast, problem-solution, description, list, and argument. When students understand the structure of a text, they are better equipped to not only understand each part of the text but also how the parts fit together to create a larger whole. I often demonstrate the importance of structure by showing students a bar of random music notes and asking them to identify the song. They cannot because the sequence of notes has no recognizable order. Then I show them the same notes organized into the first bar of “I am a Child of God.” I explain that being able to see the structures in scripture is the difference between seeing a string of individual notes—this happened, then that happened, then the song is over—and knowing how the notes work together to produce the music.

A simple example of text structure might be 1 Nephi 16. One structure in this chapter is problem-solution: Nephi is faced with the problem of getting food for his family without his or his brothers’ bows, so he tries to solve the problem by making a new bow and arrow and asking his father where to find food. Simply recognizing the problem-solution structure brings the problem and the solution parts of the chapter together, which is critical for understanding the larger narrative and the spiritual implications of what Nephi did. Ultimately, knowing how “the notes” fit together helps students know where to find the information they need, determine what is important in a passage, and develop a high-level consciousness of how scripture and specific passages are organized, all of which can improve students’ understanding and appreciation of what they read.

Practice 6: Break Apart the Text

Good scripture readers do not simply read from the first word to the last word. They often mentally and physically break the text into smaller chunks for in-depth investigations of appropriately sized pieces of scripture. To understand the overall structure of Mosiah 9–22, for example, good readers might chunk it chapter by chapter to explore what is going on and how each chapter fits into a larger chronological and geographic whole. Breaking apart the text can help clarify the chapters and their relationship to each other, which can improve youths’ understanding of this section of the Book of Mormon. On a smaller scale, good readers also break apart texts sentence by sentence, or phrase by phrase, to clarify their understanding of each piece and how the pieces fit together. This micro-level chunking may be appropriate for understanding how Christ is both the Father and the Son in Mosiah 15:1–5. Knowing that they can break apart a text and look at the specific pieces that cause them trouble can be liberating for young people. It can free them from believing they have to read and understand entire passages all at once, which is not only unreasonable, it is also unfair. This is simply not how good readers engage with difficult texts. And it is not how young scripture-readers should do it either.
Practice 7: Know and Use Fix-It Strategies

When they realize they are confused, good scripture readers have a repertoire of strategies they can use to fix their understanding. These include the following:

- Taking a break
- Using resources in scripture
- Asking someone for help
- Reading on
- Rereading the passage
- Activating prior knowledge
- Reflecting in writing
- Using context clues
- Retelling what was just read
- Adjusting reading speed
- Stopping and thinking

As another Latter-day Saint young woman that I worked with read 3 Nephi 12:13 about “the salt of the earth,” she said, “I’m thinking this is kind of a confusing verse for me. I know I had it explained before, but I forget what it means.” Having identified her confusion, she tried to fix it. First, she activated her background knowledge about the phrase “the salt of the earth.” This did not seem to work, so she moved onto her second fix-it strategy: rereading. After she reread the verse, she said, “I guess it is saying that we are the faithful ones, and that [laughs] . . . I don’t know.” I asked her what she thought she should do next. She responded with her third fix-it strategy, stating, “I’d probably look at the footnotes and see if there is anything that can help me.” She reviewed the footnotes and decided she did not want to look up any of the suggested passages. While in the footnotes, she was led to her fourth strategy: looking up salt in the index. This did not work for her either. I asked her what she was thinking, and she confessed, “I don’t know.”

Working hard to repair her confusion, this young woman identified and used a number of fix-it strategies with varying degrees of thoroughness and skill. Although ultimately unsuccessful at understanding the verse, her efforts showed that she worked hard to fix her confusion, that she did not fixate on one fix-it strategy, and that she used a number of different strategies as required by the passage and her reading purpose. Some of us may be bothered that she did not repair her confusion by coming to understand what “salt of the earth” meant, but it is important to keep in mind that knowing what this phrase meant may not have been a high priority for her. It was clearly interesting to her based on the time and effort she put into trying to repair her confusion, but other things were clearly more pressing, such as finishing the chapter, or finishing the interview, or not wanting to be seen as a floundering reader. In the end, the work this young woman did to fix her reading confusion demonstrates how good readers deal with scripture-based confusion.

Practice 8: Read Purposefully

Reading without a purpose is like driving without knowing where we are going. We may be in a car, but if we do not know our destination, then it does not matter where we go, the path we take, or when we stop driving. The same is true for reading. We may be saying all of the words, but if we do not know our reading purpose, then it is difficult to know how quickly or slowly to read, which parts to focus on, when to skim, and when we have learned what we need to learn. One of the characteristics of good scripture readers is that they are purposeful. Knowing why they are reading gives them direction, focus, and resolve. It also helps them know what to think about as they read. We should, therefore, be clear about why we have asked our students to read certain passages. Even if they are not given a purpose for reading, good scripture readers develop their own authentic purposes to guide their reading. Good readers also know purpose matters a great deal with regard to what they get out of a text. Take Moroni’s words on faith in Ether 12. A student could read the passage for a variety of purposes:

- To compare it to other passages about faith
- To see which examples of faith Moroni uses
- To generate ideas for helping a doubting friend
- To overcome personal fears about serving a mission, talking to a bishop, or moving to a different school
- To learn what faith is
- To feel the Spirit

Because each of these reading purposes is different, each one is likely to yield different experiences with Ether 12. This means students are likely to learn different things from the chapter. I do not think it is too much to say that
Purpose is one of the key drivers of scripture literacy. Try this experiment to see how purpose influences reading:

- Read Ether 12:6–9 to define faith.
- Read the verses again with the following question in mind: “How can I strengthen my faith?”
- Read the verses a third time to examine what “the heavenly gift” (Ether 12:8–9) might mean and how it relates to faith.

This brief experiment can demonstrate that reading purposes matter a great deal. They influence what and how we learn from scripture; specifically, that why we read (purpose for reading) influences how we read (manner of reading) and what we take from our reading (learning from reading). The same is true for our youth.

**Practice 9: Activate Background Knowledge**

Good readers understand that they do not come to scripture as blank slates with nothing to draw from to help them with the material; that is, they realize their knowledge, attitudes, opinions, and experiences can be used to make sense of scripture. When Nephi and Lehi are in prison, surrounded by a cloud of darkness (see Helaman 5), a good reader might activate her background knowledge about doubt, fear, sin, and the history of the Lamanites to understand what is going on. She might think about her own dark times when she felt afraid and uncertain, and she might reflect on the ways she overcame them to predict what might happen in the chapter with this particular cloud of darkness. Good readers do not read in a vacuum. They realize that their knowledge and lifetime of experiences influence how they read and what they get out of scripture. Notice in this example that the student activated the appropriate background knowledge and experiences to help her understand the passage. Had she activated irrelevant prior knowledge or fixated on experiences that did not relate to the passage, then her understanding of the passage would have likely suffered, not improved.

It is important to remember that everything our youth learn becomes prior knowledge immediately after they have learned it, which means they can instantly draw from it to improve their scripture literacy. This might help us think about creating prior knowledge in our students before we jump into a chapter. If, for example, our youth are unfamiliar in a general way with the scattering and gathering of Israel, then helping them develop that understanding could give them just the right background knowledge they need to find their way through Jacob 5, making important connections and learning important lessons about Heavenly Father’s relationship with Israel as they go. Without this background knowledge, Jacob 5 is simply a jumble of loosely connected conversations between a master and his servants about trees, grafting, and fertilizing.

Creating the knowledge that youth need to engage more carefully and deeply with scripture is an important way to think about the role of prior knowledge in scripture literacy. Ultimately, students’ use of prior knowledge can improve their understanding of scripture, their ability to infer meaning and generate sophisticated insights, and their skill at drawing out lessons from specific passages. It is worth our time to think carefully about creating and activating our youths’ prior knowledge as it relates to specific scripture passages.

**Practice 10: Expect Scripture to Make Sense**

Many young people do not know that scripture is supposed to make sense. As I teach youth and young adults to read scripture and other types of texts, I often ask them, “What is reading?” and “How do you know when you’ve read something?” Most of them talk about reading as knowing all of the words, finishing a section of text, or saying all of the words without making any mistakes. Most students never talk about reading in terms of what they have read making sense to them. Some youth have told me, “Reading is looking at all of the words,” “I know I’ve read something because I’ve turned the page,” and “I know I’ve read it because I’ve touched the page” (emphasis added). These young people have not yet made the connection between saying or silently reading the words and making sense of what they read. Meaning is not in the words, it is in the relationships that exist among the words.

For many youth, understanding what they are reading may feel like magic—something that just happens mysteriously, even magically as they move their eyes across the page and down. Sometimes it happens. Sometimes it doesn’t. Good readers, however, understand that scripture is intentional and purposeful, and not a random collection of words. They realize that the words in scripture work together verse by verse, page by page, to say something meaningful and to convey ideas that are bigger than the words themselves. Good scripture readers expect scripture to have meaning, and
they actively look for the meaning as they read, even if it takes a lot of mental and spiritual effort and requires them to ask questions, reread, and do a little in-depth investigation. When youth understand that scripture is supposed to make sense, they are no longer adrift in a sea of words. They have something to anchor them in the text: the search for spiritually important meaning.

Final Thoughts

Although partial, these ten practices identify some of the most important things that scripture readers should know and do to become literate with scripture. The good news is that all of these practices can be taught. Some youth may have developed these practices before they even enter our classrooms, but most often good scripture readers are not born, nor do they enter our classrooms fully formed. Instead, they are made day by day, verse by verse, through their own hard work and the careful scripture literacy instruction of informed teachers and parents.

As we think about what we might do with these practices in our scripture literacy instruction, it is important to remember that they are not a checklist. We cannot simply explain them to our students and expect them to do them on their own; rather, students should practice these skills regularly, naturally, and with various scripture passages to help them accomplish their own scripture reading purposes. As we introduce new approaches for developing scripture literacy, like the practices in this article, we might consider the following:

- Clearly demonstrate what the practice looks like and make a case for its value.
- Make the practice explicit by talking about it as we model it.
- Demonstrate the same practice across various scripture passages.
- Demonstrate how to use several practices together.
- Give students opportunities to use the practice strategically and flexibly to construct gospel knowledge and deepen their faith.

It is also important to remember that these practices are tools. They are meant to improve youths’ understanding of scripture, or to develop their scripture literacy, by helping them get inside of the ideas, principles, and doctrine in scripture. To develop these tools, youth benefit from clear explanations of what the tools are, teacher models of how they work, and some flexibility in their implementation.

Notes

1. “Knowledges and practices” more accurately conveys the thrust of the article because it identifies some of the things that good scripture readers should know (knowledges) and do (practices) when they read scripture. However, “knowledges and practices” can be unwieldy, so I use “practices” as shorthand throughout the article.
2. See Dennis A. Wright, “Realities of Scripture Literacy” (faculty forum, McKay School of Education, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, February 1997).
Narrating the Scriptures: Using a Literary Approach to Enhance Scripture Teaching

ADAM P. HOCK

Evaluating the scriptures from a literary perspective can enhance reading and teaching the scriptures, yet it remains an untapped resource for many religious educators. Bible and literary scholar Robert Alter queried, “What role does literary art play in the shaping of biblical narrative?” The question extends beyond biblical narrative to scriptural narrative and teaching. A literary approach to scripture enhances the classroom experience for teachers and students. Literary analysis allows a class to explore the nuances of a text and identify authorial intent of the scripture while encouraging students to see a complex, beautiful narrative.

A literary approach, or literary analysis, consists of using skills normally employed in literature classes to understand scriptures. This paper introduces some literary skills focused around the narrator and characters that can enhance scripture teaching, followed with a model of how to use these methods in a classroom. Narrators use omissions, repetition, and pace of narration to navigate the reader to ideas. Characters’ motives emerge through the use of actions and reactions, as well as details such as names, dialogue, and actions. Understanding the techniques of the narrator and characters...
increases reliance upon the text of the scriptures while encouraging students to discover principles with greater efficacy.

Evaluating scriptural literary qualities reveals important characteristics about the text, but it should not be the only method used to evaluate the scriptures. Historical analysis helps to understand meaning beyond the literary components of a scriptural narrative. Biblical scholar Mark Allan Powell explained the use of literary analysis well: "Narrative criticism is best understood as one key among several that are available to biblical interpreters. Used properly, it is able to open some doors and grant access to certain kinds of insight that may not be otherwise attainable. But it will not open all the doors or answer all the questions that people ask about the Bible and about the meaning of biblical material."

Literary analysis should be used as one tool within a teacher’s repertoire of methods. While reading scripture as narrative can be beneficial, it also has limitations. Generally, this method ignores historical factors in the text. Though this paper ignores historical perspectives while accentuating the literary concepts, teaching and studying scripture without including historical factors would produce a skewed version of the text. Scripture does not exist in a vacuum. Historical and literary components factor into the creation of the text, and both should contribute in the reading and teaching of scripture. The narrators in scripture include both factors when compiling the sacred records.

Narrator

The narrator operates one of the most essential capacities of the narrative: he or she determines what the reader understands about it. Superficial readings might not identify the narrator in scripture, but the narrator acts in an essential role in the presentation of the narrative. He or she invokes editorial decisions throughout a story about what to include or omit, how to emphasize different portions, or how to portray a character. The narrator invites the reader into the narrative. Readers will benefit from identifying the narrator and how he or she influences the text.

Narrators differ in Latter-day Saint scripture depending on the book of scripture. The Bible employs a reticent narrator who frequently disappears into the background. The biblical narrator supplies sparse details and recounts events without giving commentary or telling the reader how to interpret the story. For example, the Lukan narrator avoids commentary even in the poignant moment where Christ informs Peter that the Apostle will deny his Lord three times. The Lukan narrator shifts the focus from Peter to Christ, who is counted as a transgressor, without explaining what will happen to Peter or what the reader should learn (Luke 22:37). The narrator recounts the three denials but gives no explanation on the meaning of the events. Instead, the narrator states casually, "And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62). The narrator’s silence in this and other instances throughout the Bible allows varying modern interpretations about the significance of the event.

The Book of Mormon narrators are different and intervene actively in the text, which creates less ambiguity for the reader—especially for the inexperienced reader. The narrators’ insertions in the Book of Mormon create key moments for the reader to see the purpose of the story. Biblical scholar Shimeon Bar-Efrat explains the power of this method: "Whenever this is done, it shifts the readers out of the stratum of the plot and transfers them to the narrator’s own sphere. Explanations of events are a powerful look in the hands of the narrator, enabling clear and unequivocal messages to be conveyed to the readers." The Book of Mormon contains this approach with "And thus we see" statements, but it is more expansive than just that. Nephi articulates, "I desire . . . that I may write of the things of God. For the fullness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved" (1 Nephi 6:3–4). Moroni laments his imperfections in writing and acknowledges that he is writing for his future reader: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not" (Mormon 8:33). In the Korihor narrative, Mormon inserts that "they [the people of Ammon] were more wise than many of the Nephites" before explaining that the people captured Korihor and brought him before the judge (Alma 30:20). Mormon’s insertion demonstrates that the narrator felt dismissing Korihor was the best course of action against the offender. These acknowledgements establish a framework for evaluating the narrative and inform the audience about the narrator’s editorial decisions. The burden of identifying the meaning of the narrative shifts away from the reader, since the narrator articulates the moral. Subsequently, the narrator helps the teacher identify where to direct the attention of a student. Teachers can mine these moments to depict how the text operates and how the narrator invites the reader into the text.

The different types of narrators in scripture become an important format for students to understand. Many LDS students expect a narration style similar to that found in the Book of Mormon, and the biblical narrators employ...
different techniques which make the text appear foreign and uninviting. Teachers who help their students understand the different types of narrators in the scriptures equip students with an ability to discover meaning in all scripture rather than just the familiar stories. Teaching students to identify the role of the narrator promises to enhance their personal and classroom scripture study.

Omissions

Creating omissions is another technique that provides additional insights into the text. Omissions occur when the narrator excludes details from the narrative, which leaves the reader to speculate about a portion of the story. For example, Christ appeared to the brother of Jared in one of the poignant moments of the Book of Mormon. The narrator mentions the corporeal nature of Christ but provides no details about whether the markings from the cross were present on the body of Christ or what Christ was wearing. The omissions imply that those details would distract the reader from Christ’s main message to the brother of Jared. Christ’s dialogue focuses on his body rather than the Crucifixion and Atonement: “And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created after mine own image. Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh” (Ether 3:15–16). The omissions in this selection provide an opportunity for students to analyze the text and try to determine what happened with the characters of the story. Many times, the students seek the easiest answer to omissions in the narrative. Yet a teacher can enhance the scriptural narrative by encouraging the students to see other explanations that would enhance the narrative. The danger of this discussion is theorizing about the scriptures instead of staying grounded in the text. A skilled teacher draws the student’s attention to the initial iteration and guides the student to find the repetition throughout the narrative. Incorporating repetition into the lesson helps students experience the moment in the scriptures and connect with the narrative beyond a superficial reading.

Repetitions appear beyond word usage to include repeated actions in the narrative. The story of Balaam and Balak, the donkey refuses to progress in three separate instances. Each refusal escalates the intensity of the situation until the donkey verbally informs Balaam that an angel forbids the animal from proceeding. Finally, Balaam sees the angel and acquiesces (Numbers 22). The narrative of Abraham and Sarah frequently acknowledges their inability to have children. The narrator repeats the promise of fertility and concurrent barrenness to intensify the joy felt with the birth of Isaac and the torture of the command to kill the son (Genesis 11–22). Repetitions in the narrative are intended to build upon each other throughout the text, and draw the reader’s attention to the occurrence. The reader should feel the difficulty of the situation with each repetition of a phrase. A skilled teacher helps students experience the moment in the scriptures and connect with the narrative beyond a superficial reading.

Repetition also intertwines narratives, which invites the reader to draw comparisons. The Gospel of Luke frequently couples narratives together to create an interaction between them. For example, the births of John the Baptist and Christ repeat similar language and actions to demonstrate the supremacy of Christ, as seen hereafter. Both narratives feature an angelic
visitation to announce a miraculous birth. One miracle occurs due to age, while the other virginity. The angel proclaims “Fear not” to both Zacharias and Mary (Luke 1:13, 30). The same language is repeated when naming the child: the angel commands Zacharias to “call his name John,” while the angel tells Mary, “and shall call his name Jesus” (Luke 1:13, 31). The repetition continues when the angel says John “shall be great in the sight of the Lord” and later states that Jesus “shall be great” (Luke 1:15, 32). Each iteration of similar characteristics invites the reader to compare the two great men, and eventually, they elevate Christ above John. This type of repetition furnishes teachers with an activity for students to look through the scriptures to see the beauty of these narratives.

The use of repetition in the text reminds the reader of the carefully crafted nature of the scriptural texts. The nuances of the text intend to do more than simply identify principles. The text draws the reader into the story and captivates him or her, which gives teachers confidence that the word can interest a student when understood and used properly. Understanding the language of the literature and the narrator’s methods provides more power than a superficial reading can summon.

Flow of the Text

The narrator controls the flow of the text, meaning how quickly or slowly a narrative moves. The narrator provides and explains details to slow the story, while quickly mentioning other aspects of the story. Readers of scriptures should carefully observe the narrative unfolding. Pace demonstrates the intent of the writer, which should signal to a teacher where to slow down the lesson and where to move quickly. Robert Alter states, “The obverse of this necessity to watch for the when and how of the beginning of dialogue is equally interesting: in a narrative tradition where dialogue is preponderant, it may often prove instructive to ask why the writer decided to use narration instead of dialogue for a particular block of material or even for a particular brief moment in a scene.” For example, the narrative spends little time explaining Judah’s spouse in the narrative of Judah and Tamar. It moves swiftly through the births and deaths of their children. The rapid-fire succession of events depicts the relative insignificance of these details in the overarching narrative. Conversely, the narrator devotes considerable attention to the dialogue between Judah and Tamar as she negotiates the price for her prostitution. This is just one example of how nuances in the text and the speed of the narrative can assist a teacher in planning the lesson and funneling attention to the salient points within a scriptural block.

The narrator shapes the narrative as well as how the class evaluates the story. Narrator intervention identifies explicit principles in the stories, while other tactics lead readers to understand the implicit principles. Identifying techniques of omissions, repetition, and pace of delivery will help teachers show a nuanced text that demonstrates the carefully crafted nature of scripture.

Character

Readers tend to overlook the role of narrators because the text focuses considerable attention on the characters in the narrative. Alter defined biblical characters and what a reader should identify in the text: “Character can be revealed through the report of actions; through appearance, gestures, posture, costume; through one character’s comments on another; through direct speech by the character; through inward speech, either summarized or quoted as interior monologue; or through statements by the narrator about the attitude and intentions of the personages, which may come either as flat assertions or motivated explanations.” Inexperienced readers dichotomize
characters into good and bad categories when reading and teaching scripture. Either the person follows God or they do not. 15 This dichotomy creates characters that are flat and lack relatability. Narrators depict characters with more complexity than the simple dichotomy, which better reflects the intricacies of life. Book of Mormon scholar Grant Hardy explains, “The narrators have deliberately shaped their characterizations to provoke certain reactions in readers, and this process is more interesting than a simple up-or-down judgment on whether any particular figure is compelling or inspiring.” 16 Each detail or omission provides critical information to shape a nuanced character.

Scripture offers sparse details about peripheral issues such as routine tasks. 17 Details given about characters shape the narrative almost immediately. The short-story form of the scriptures forces the narrator to use and incorporate details quickly and efficiently. 18 Each detail or omission of detail becomes salient to the story. For example, the scripture narrators rarely include description of characters’ physical movements except for in few instances, such as when Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh. The narrator informs the reader that Jacob crossed his hands. The additional detail designates the change in birthright and superiority of Ephraim and Manasseh. 19 A different Jacob, a Book of Mormon prophet, mentions that Sherem “had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech” (Jacob 7:4). These details are specific to Sherem and become important later in the narrative as Sherem employs sophistry to try to confound Jacob. The narrator, in this case Jacob, identifies Sherem’s character traits to develop the plot and explain the motives of the characters. The inclusion of details acts as a marker for the reader to identify future actions and significant points in the narrative.

Names and Titles

The names of characters mold the reader’s perception of the participants in the narrative. Names demonstrate the importance of a character to the narrative or suggest future actions of the character. The name or title becomes a narrator’s tool to frame how the reader views the individual. For example, Bathsheba is not immediately identified when David looks upon her. The text only refers to her as a woman without a name who “was very beautiful to look upon” (2 Samuel 11:2). The narrator depicts her only as an object for lust with the use of “beautiful” and dehumanizes her by omitting a name. The title and adjective establish Bathsheba’s primary role in the narrative as someone to fulfill David’s lust. Doctrine and Covenants 3 identifies Martin Harris as a wicked man, instead of naming him, which adds to the Lord’s displeasure with his actions regarding the lost 116 manuscript pages (D&C 3:12). Korihor is originally called “Anti-Christ” before Mormon shares the actual name in Alma 30:6. The label denotes Korihor’s intention to lead away followers of Christ before the reader observes his actions.

Descriptive titles assist readers to understand the character or create a conception about the individual early in the story. 20 Hagar is consistently referred to as Saraí’s maid, which reminds the reader of her inferior status to Saraí (Genesis 16:1, 3, 8). Emma Smith is called “my daughter” by the Lord, showing her distinguished position before God, which sets up the eventual announcement that she is “an elect lady” (D&C 25:1, 3). These names and titles prepare later aspects in the narrative and provide clues into principles and ideas for teachers to emphasize while teaching.

Omission of names minimizes or dehumanizes the character in the story but also suggests a short role for a character in the narrative. David and Bathsheba do not name the child born from the illicit act. The omission suggests the child died in birth or shortly thereafter. 21 Multiple groups comprise nameless characters, including family members, servants, attendants, and other minor characters. However, the nameless character can play a major role in the story, similar to Lamoni’s father in Alma 20 or Lot’s wife in Genesis 19. Both characters shape the role of the narrative, even though the narrator never identifies them. Lesser characters inform the reader about the relationship between the main character and others in their world. 22 Minor characters direct attention to the main character.

Acts 3 provides an example of the role of nameless characters. The narrative focuses on a lame man sitting outside of the temple collecting alms. The man asks Peter for donations. Peter responds that he lacks the resources to help him financially but can bless him. The Apostle says to the man, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6). The man receives strength and departs praising God. The narrator never identifies the man throughout the narrative. A teacher could begin a discussion that invites students to identify the name of the man, followed with questions about why the narrator did not incorporate his name into the story. Responses could include a discussion about how the lame man could represent any individual in need. The man lacked prominence in society and did not receive help because of
what he could do for Peter. Instead, the nameless figure represents any person. The teacher could then direct the students to realize that Christians have the same responsibility to help people, regardless of the individual's position in the world. Identifying the narrator's intentions about the character enhanced the story and demonstrated to students how the scriptures use subtlety to teach powerful principles.

**Actions and Reactions**

Characters operate in a larger capacity than plot development. Actions and reactions formulate perception of the characters. Shimeon Bar-Efrat explains, “In biblical narrative deeds do in fact serve as the foremost means of characterization, and we know biblical characters primarily through the way they act in varying situations.” Narrators choose from multiple actions of each character to best represent the primary actions of the characters and provide insight into the narrative. Actions and responses develop the message of the narrator.

Occasionally, narrators furnish the thoughts of the characters within the narrative, which clarifies the characters' actions and simplifies interpretation. A character's conduct, coupled with thoughts, affords opportunities for understanding the motives and beliefs of the character. These actions, with or without thoughts, prove indispensable for religious educators because they provide occasions for analysis and application. Principles generally emerge from the choices of the characters. The story of Judah and Tamar exemplifies this style of narration. The narrator inserts the story to depict how each character acts when confronted with sexual immorality. The narrative does not advance the plot, yet it exemplifies principles, especially when connected with Joseph in Genesis 39. Moments focused on the characters' actions establish principles, even when the deeds do not necessarily add to the storyline.

**Dialogue**

The use of dialogue enhances the depth of characterization. Dialogue weakens characters with silence or minimizes the role of other characters with limited discourse. For example, Laman and Lemuel speak one time during the confrontation with Laban. The utterance questions whether the brothers should continue to pursue the plates because of Laban's army (1 Nephi 3:31). Nephi, the narrator, silences Laman and Lemuel, which shows their lack of importance to the narrative.

The exchange between characters shapes the narrative and highlights principles from the text. Robert Alter speculates that biblical writers used dialogue because “they tended to feel that thought was not fully itself until it was articulated as speech.” Throughout the scriptures, editors use dialogue to convey thought as well as conversation. For example, Alma's conversation with Korihor in Alma 30 reveals Korihor's craftiness with language. The dialogue between Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 magnifies the tension of the scene. Readers begin to sense how each character felt as Abraham bound Isaac. Instructors can guide students to comprehend Abraham's emotions, which heightens the symbolism of Heavenly Father's sacrifice of his son. Teachers draw these principles from the scriptures to enhance their own reading and discover the complex beauty of scriptures. The dialogue in scriptures reveals the motives of characters when the narrator does not supply the information. Identifying the motives of a character's life enriches a student's ability to relate the scriptures to his or her individual challenges.

**1 Nephi 2–4: A Model**

The beginning of the Book of Mormon provides a familiar place to demonstrate how to implement narrative techniques when preparing and delivering a lesson. Narrative readings begin with identifying Nephi's role as a narrator in the text. Nephi acts as both narrator and character in this story. Throughout his narration, Nephi explains that he wants to persuade people to believe in Christ and that he glories in plainness (2 Nephi 33:6). These intentions help focus the narrative.

The narrative appears to begin in chapter 3 when the narrator identifies that Nephi spoke to the Lord and returned to the tent of his father. The brief comment of returning to the tent of his father links 1 Nephi 2:15 into the narrative where Nephi identifies that his father dwelt in a tent. Nephi's interaction with the Lord at the end of chapter 2 sets the stage for the excursion to obtain the plates, and creates a new beginning to the narrative.

Nephi approaches the Lord in chapter 2 to assuage his concerns about leaving Jerusalem and entering the wilderness. This encounter with God introduces the differing levels of obedience between Nephi and his brethren to the narrative. Nephi wrote, “I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers” (1 Nephi 2:16). Nephi interrupts the narrative to inform the reader
that Sam would later accept his words while Laman and Lemuel would reject his words. The interruption accentuates the tension between Nephi, Laman, and Lemuel regarding their attempts at obedience.

Nephi returns to the narrative with instructions from the Lord, which informs him of four facts: (1) he will inherit a land of promise and prosper in the land; (2) Laman and Lemuel will rebel and be cut off from the presence of the Lord; (3) if Nephi keeps the commandments, then he will be a ruler and teacher over Laman and Lemuel; and (4) the Lord will curse Laman and Lemuel for rebellion. The direction from the Lord foreshadows how Nephi will narrate the story. Nephi will cast Laman and Lemuel into the role of rebellion while he strives to keep the commandments. Nephi will try to teach and correct his brothers with little success.

Chapter 3 links the tent where Lehi dwelt and revelation from God when Nephi writes, “I, Nephi, returned from speaking with the Lord, to the tent of my father,” but then creates a subtle repetition of commandments that carries throughout the first few verses (1 Nephi 3:1). The repetition originates in 1 Nephi 2:20 when the Lord exhorts Nephi to keep the commandments, and continues in verse 22 with the instruction to keep the commandments. Lehi reveals to Nephi that the Lord commanded him to return to Jerusalem. Verse 5 reiterates, “It is a commandment of the Lord.” Finally, verse 7 intensifies the usage with three variations of the word command: “do the things which the Lord had commanded,” “giveth no commandments unto the children of men,” and “they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” Nephi’s repetition gradually builds to his decision to follow the commandments of God. Nephi directs additional attention to this section of the narrative with the use of dialogue between Lehi and himself.

In the classroom, a teacher using a literary focus demonstrates how the narrative begins in chapter 2. The class identifies the promises of the Lord to Nephi, and then the teacher could share how this will foreshadow the narrative. The class studies 1 Nephi 3:1–7 to look for the repeated word in those verses and where the highest concentration of the word occurs. The students would notice the frequency of command, and the high concentration in verse 7. The teacher asks about Nephi’s objective in repeating command. Answers could include how Nephi wants to show his interest in following God and how he concentrates a significant number of verbs into verse 7, which alert the reader to the verse he wants attention directed. The teacher could reference Nephi’s vision of God in chapter 2 to show the origins of Nephi’s motives. Nephi gained the courage to follow the commands of his father from a heavenly revelation. Many lessons would focus on Nephi’s obedience, but the discussion could be enhanced by considering how revelation encouraged Nephi’s obedience to the commandments. Students would learn obedience and how to acquire greater obedience to the commandments of God.
is potentially delusional, but she does not murmur (1 Nephi 5:2). Nephi's use of the term reminds the reader of the children of Israel's murmuring in the wilderness. Nephi draws the reader's attention to what he feels is an audacious pattern of rejecting the word of the Lord. The angel arrives and speaks to the brothers. The angelic dialogue in the narrative accentuates the importance of the message. Laman and Lemuel do not speak until after the angel departs. Nephi then repeats almost the exact same phrase to emphasize the angelic appearance and departure before Laman and Lemuel murmur. Nephi writes, "And after the angel had spoken unto us, he departed. And after the angel had departed . . ." (1 Nephi 3:30–31). The experience should align the reader with the children of Israel who had many supernatural experiences yet murmured. Nephi uses the term to lead the reader to a negative conception of his brethren. The experience fulfills the prophecy of chapter 2 that Laman and Lemuel rebel and are severed from divine presence due to rebellion. Nephi's repetition and use of the word murmur intend to show how Laman and Lemuel rebelled against God, which justified Nephi's ruling over them as promised in chapter 2. The teacher could point out many of these literary aspects while explaining the storyline.

Nephi, the narrator, fashions himself, the character, as a contrast to Laman and Lemuel. The experience in chapter 2 left Nephi with a new confidence in the journey, which he displayed in his decision to retrieve the plates. The juxtaposition of Nephi and his older brethren is intended to elevate Nephi above his brothers. They murmur, while he shines as an ideal. Yet a close reading shows a more fragile Nephi when he is confronted with killing Laban.

Nephi introduces a fourth physically present character when he comes across Laban in the alley: the Spirit. Nephi produces a verbal dialogue between himself and the Spirit as though the Spirit is a corporeal individual at the scene. The narrative suggests Nephi's experience came through impressions and feelings rather than an audible conversation with a present individual when Nephi writes, "I said in my heart" (1 Nephi 4:10). Nephi constructs the narrative to appear as a conversation between two people. He uses dialogue to draw the reader's attention to the situation and makes the Spirit a crucial character in the story. Playing the role of editor, Nephi elevates the necessity of the Spirit to help him justify killing Laban. The dialogue between the two characters depicts a timid Nephi. The young man cowers and fears. He writes, "And I shrunk and would that I might not slay him" (1 Nephi 4:10). The Spirit charges Nephi to slay the man: "Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. . . . The Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes" (1 Nephi 4:11, 13). The dialogue and the construction of the Spirit as a physical entity intend to elevate the message—that of slaying a man—above reproach for the reader.

A teacher could guide this situation in many directions in the classroom. The instructor may discuss Nephi's creation of an existing character in the Spirit. A class could discuss why Nephi would design this character who verbally speaks to him instead of suggesting that impressions came to his heart only. Many teachers rely on 1 Nephi 4:6, "And I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do," to carry this lesson, while more content about the Holy Ghost exists in the text. Emphasizing the dialogue frames the narrative for a fuller discussion for how the Spirit operates in the lives of individuals. Also, a teacher could look at Nephi's change in persona in this passage. The class could discuss why Nephi lacked confidence at this moment as compared to the valiance displayed earlier. A class could observe that faith does not come instantly. Even people who possess faith waver. Only relying upon God can situate the disciple of Christ in the right place.

Nephi succinctly ends the narrative with, "And it came to pass that we took the plates of brass and the servant of Laban, and departed into the wilderness, and journeyed unto the tent of our father" (1 Nephi 4:38). The reference to the tent of Lehi weaves the narrative together with 1 Nephi 2:15 and completes the narrative.

Conclusion
This discussion of 1 Nephi 2–4 modeled evaluating narrators and characters in the scriptures. The role of the narrator helps readers understand the authorial intent. Narrators may or may not insert their opinion into the scriptures. Overt narrators will explain exactly what the reader should draw from the text. Reticent narrators use repetition, omissions, and the pace of the story to invite the reader to see the meaning in the story. Both narrators encourage readers to search with greater intensity for these clues in the scriptures. A teacher can instruct and assist students to search and find these methods with their personal study.

Narrators use characters as a primary means to develop the principles and lessons in the sacred text. Readers become primarily concerned with the
character’s actions and reactions. The actions help the reader discern the principle in the story. Details in the narrative, such as names and titles, lead the reader to identifying the lesson, while dialogue shows the reader the motive of the characters. Each component unites to depict a lesson for the reader. Characters become dynamic people with whom the reader can identify. Students may have a greater desire to study scripture because they see a character that experienced similar situations in life.

Teaching students the scriptures is one of the most fundamental roles of religious educators. Demonstrating a literary perspective for students equips them with skills that can be used outside the classroom. Students will learn to analyze the scriptures and learn the intent of the author, instead of skimming the words of the page and missing significant content. A literary reading does not require additional historical information and is especially useful for a less-experienced scripture reader. It can also encourage an experienced teacher to look deeper into a story. A literary reading can help students develop a deeper understanding and love of the scriptures that continues through their life.

Notes

3. For examples of isolation narrative from historical factors, see D. M Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11.
4. Gunn and Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, 53.
8. Gunn and Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, 147.
15. Gunn and Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, 49.
16. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 52.
Consider the positive impact a peer-tutoring relationship could have on students, in which the mentor serves, testifies, and ministers daily to a student with disabilities.

The Doctrine of Inclusion: Reaching Students with Disabilities

Reginald S. Slocombe

Reginald S. Slocombe (SlocombeRS@ldschurch.org) is the coordinator for the Anchorage Alaska Institute.

I remember the first time I walked into a class for students with special needs when I was a teacher at the Logan Seminary in Cache Valley, Utah. I was asked to assist Sister Wendy Parker with her second-hour class. She did not have all of her students with disabilities paired up with their traditional peer tutors, so I needed to help maintain order as she continued to organize the class. As I saw many students within that looked and sounded different than traditional students, I realized I had no idea what to do in this classroom! After a moment, I snuck in the back. In less than a minute, a student sitting in a desk a few feet in front of me turned, looked directly at me, and stood up. Standing about three inches taller than me, he was as solid as a Mack truck, and it seemed that I was in his lane. As he stepped closer, he tilted his head back slightly and stuck out his chin to size me up a bit, and I noticed his hand clenched in a fist. I was about ready to bolt for the door, or at least duck if he threw a punch, when he smiled a toothy grin, grunted, and held out his fist. Relief washed over me when I realized he wanted to give me a fist bump! Sheepishly stuck out my fist, and our knuckles touched. He laughed, reached up, put his arm on my shoulder, and, turning to a classmate, gave
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But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.6

More recently, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.”7 Elder Marion D. Hanks of the Seventy, commenting on the weight of this statement, taught, “God expects that His . . . children [with disabilities] will be given an opportunity for that enlargement, and that His disciples will accept the great responsibility to be concerned that they are.”8 These teachings and statements highlight the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regarding individuals with disabilities and stand as pillars for the entire program of Church education. I have a witness of the truthfulness of these principles even when it comes to severe physical and mental disabilities, and I am not alone. Many have shared similar expressions with me and have felt, as I do, a desire to contribute in that effort to enlarge the minds and spirits of God’s children.

Where We Have Been

In order to see the path clearly ahead of us, it is important to understand where we have been. Seminaries and Institutes (S&I) began addressing the issue of providing for the needs of those with disabilities of secondary-age level and above in the 1970s as the United States government implemented the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 in public education.9 These efforts were modest at first and improved over time. The special education S&I program was conceived as a stand-alone entity that sought to address the specific issues regarding the gospel education of students with disabilities, in isolation from traditional S&I programs. Those disabilities being addressed ranged from chronic health problems, language and speech disorders, vision loss and blindness, and hearing loss and deafness, to mental illness, impaired mobility, intellectual disabilities, and autism. Interestingly, those

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who administered and staffed this program were treated similarly to how students with disabilities were treated at the time: They were separate from and rarely included in the work of the traditional S&I program. They had a separate administration, scheduled and held their own meetings, and in fact did not even have offices in the same building as the rest of S&I. Consequently, many felt that all this contributed to a certain “step-sister quality” about the program and how it fit in the larger Church Educational System family of seminaries, institutes, primary and secondary schools, and universities. Although many areas of special education in S&I moved forward, this feeling remained for many years.

By the late 1970s, the special education seminaries were using a program developed by the Church headquarters for helping young American Indian students attain a greater educational opportunity called the Indian Placement Program (IPP). The IPP provided teachers with a foundational resource on which to base curriculum for the special education program of S&I, but no formal curriculum was established. The special education staff worked tirelessly and eventually received permission to write and illustrate the basic canon of scripture in a condensed format known as “scripture readers.” These scripture readers then became the foundation of the curriculum for the special education program. Subsequently, the scripture readers have permeated the entire Primary program of the Church. Today, millions of Latter-day Saint homes have these scripture readers and use them on a regular basis to help young children learn the basic stories, doctrines, and principles of the standard works. They have recently been digitized and made available through the LDS gospel library app and lds.org in both audio and video formats. Despite these tremendous contributions and advances, a formal, universally adaptable seminary curriculum that accommodates students with disabilities has not been created.

As public school efforts increased in the late 1980s and into the 1990s to mainstream students with disabilities,10 the special education S&I program was slowly merged into the traditional S&I program of the Church. However, the attitude in S&I during that time seemed to be that since mainstreaming had begun, “now everyone was healed,”11 and little more needed to be done to accommodate students with disabilities. There seemed to be a prevailing attitude that including students with disabilities was only a special education issue and not a general-education issue for all to care about, work on, and offer support and help. The step-sister feeling continued in the administration of S&I, but no formal curriculum was established. The special education staff worked tirelessly and eventually received permission to write and illustrate the basic canon of scripture in a condensed format known as “scripture readers.” These scripture readers then became the foundation of the curriculum for the special education program. Subsequently, the scripture readers have permeated the entire Primary program of the Church. Today, millions of Latter-day Saint homes have these scripture readers and use them on a regular basis to help young children learn the basic stories, doctrines, and principles of the standard works. They have recently been digitized and made available through the LDS gospel library app and lds.org in both audio and video formats. Despite these tremendous contributions and advances, a formal, universally adaptable seminary curriculum that accommodates students with disabilities has not been created.

Church education. However, as inclusion began to take effect and students with special needs began attending S&I classes with their traditional peers, a drastic, positive shift in perception began to take place among teachers.13

In his April 1991 general conference address “The Moving of the Water,” then Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the exceptional efforts to include all students in a seminary program in South America. He said:

In Mendoza, Argentina, we attended a seminary graduation. In the class was a young man who had great difficulty climbing ordinary steps. As the class marched in, two strong young classmates gracefully lifted him up the steps. We watched during and after the proceedings, and it became apparent that the whole class was afflicted with a marvelous kind of blindness. They could not see that he was different. They saw a classmate, a friend. In them the works of God were being manifest. While there was no physical transformation in the boy or in his classmates, they were serving like angels, soothing a spirit locked in a deformed body awaiting that time when it would be everlasting made perfect.14

This talk became a landmark in Church education in regard to the integration of students with disabilities into traditional classrooms. Additional principles that Elder Packer taught, such as, “[t]he nearer the normal patterns of conduct and discipline apply to the [disabled], the happier they will be,” began to sink in and have a deep impact on both the teachers and the administration of S&I. As a result, over time, many barriers were removed, and S&I made significant progress toward inclusion.15

Since that time, efforts have continued to increase to accommodate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible. More recently, John Weaver was asked to join the central office of S&I as a manager over the special-needs program. This became a significant step towards removing the step-sister quality of the program. Among his many projects have been considerable efforts with the curriculum department to incorporate principles of universal design and standardized formatting into S&I curriculum. This has made teacher adaptation for students with disabilities easier because the curriculum is now online in a standardized format that is transferrable to other disability-specific formats. However, teacher adaptation remains a difficult task; it requires significant time and effort for individual teachers to make the necessary adaptations each student needs without the help of a full universal curriculum.

With the continued assistance of John Weaver, section four of the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Policy Manual was updated and
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implemented. It outlined, among other things, that three different adapted programs and classes be made available for both seminary and institute programs: the inclusive class (predominately traditional students, some students with disabilities, traditional teacher); the blended class (half traditional students, half students with disabilities, designated teacher with special education experience); and the cluster class (no traditional students, all students with disabilities, designated teacher with special education experience). Each has specific purposes tailored to the needs of the disabled population enrolled. In some areas with large populations of students with disabilities attending release-time programs, an adapted-programs advisor oversees and helps administer these programs. Section four of the policy manual also details important terminology and information concerning each class offered and the specific direction for seminary program administrators to “contact local school administrators and become acquainted with the educational approach for populations with disabilities.”

This policy was intended to open the lines of communication between each school’s special education program and the release-time seminaries and, as a result, increase cooperation and collaboration. In some instances, public school special education teachers have even begun to get permission to bring non-LDS special-needs students into seminary so that they can benefit from the one-on-one peer contact they get in the blended classes. Similar results have occurred in institute special-needs classes. Additionally, a few public schools have begun to share or make available support staff such as nurses, specialists, and therapists, as well as provide access to adaptive technology devices like voice buttons, tablets, and other computer-aided devices. Such resources are only available on a limited basis to release-time seminaries without these open lines of communication.

Today, release-time seminary programs are similar to public schools programs in many ways. However, important differences remain between public school efforts to educate students with disabilities and the efforts of release-time seminaries. Seminaries do not require testing, labeling, or formal individualized education plans (IEPs), and as a result, students with disabilities are perceived rather normally by both teachers and classmates. Integration is perceived as easier when traditional students and teachers feel less formality in their association among students with disabilities. However, aside from standard updates to building codes, resources for teachers to appropriately accommodate students with disabilities are generally absent from seminary classrooms unless provided by the local school. Furthermore, teachers and administrators are traditionally not required to participate in special education training or professional development. Occasionally, teachers come into release-time seminary programs with backgrounds in special education or are provided opportunities such as Mandt training, but because of the general lack of background in special education, it is difficult to evaluate and assess teachers, classrooms, expectations, and discipline with regard to including students with disabilities. Those same findings correspond with the institute and university programs of the Church. Progress overall has been incremental and hints that there is still more to come in the future of special needs and adaptive programs in Church education.

Our Current Situation

Attitudes and Perceived Skills of Including Students with Disabilities

Regarding inclusion, it is worth considering the impact a teacher’s attitude and skill has on an entire class. The objective of all religious educators is to help students understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven. There is no stipulation that those expectations be altered for students with disabilities. Yet if religious educators are not properly prepared, they can miss those aims
for many of their students with disabilities. As mainstreaming continues to increase and more and more students with special needs are included in traditional classes across the board, there should be careful monitoring of the attitudes and skills religious educators possess that encourage inclusion. Failure to appropriately understand the current attitudes and perceptions of seminary, institute, and university teachers as well as local program administrators can have detrimental effects.17

If a religious educator is positive in his or her approach to inclusive practices, it will have a directly proportional impact on his or her skill to be able to do so.18 It follows that a positive attitude regarding including students with disabilities leads teachers to identify and implement proven strategies that bless all students.19 Purposeful seating arrangements and shortened assignments are helpful and common adaptations of inclusion, but what about adapting materials and curriculum, managing behavioral problems, and giving individual assistance to students with intellectual disabilities? Think of the impact a religious educator could have when trained to be an active observer and recognize when individual students need additional help. That educator would be capable of responding with appropriate adaptations. Consider how much more comfortable a teacher would be, and how conducive an environment they could help create for the Holy Ghost, when they have effectively collaborated with a special education teacher, area adaptive program advisor, or even a parent or guardian. Or ponder for a moment the impact a properly organized peer-tutoring relationship could have on students, in which the mentor serves, testifies, and ministers daily to a student with disabilities. Inclusive classrooms need teachers who feel confident and capable of handling these types of tasks and more.

In 2009, with the permission of S&I, I surveyed over 250 religious educators to discover their attitudes and perceived skills regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. The results were enlightening and encouraging. Many interesting characteristics, attitudes, perceptions, and relationships were revealed.

Understanding the Nature of Teaching Students with Disabilities and the Resources Available

The ability to teach and reach all the students in our classroom seems to be tied directly to the capacity to understand and connect with them. Discovering what will best meet their needs in the classroom is essential. I found that on average, religious educators had participated in less than half of one undergraduate or graduate course in special education and had participated in between one and two professional development programs regarding students with disabilities. To put that into perspective, over the course of a career of roughly thirty-five years, the average teacher has once or perhaps twice been engaged, outside of lesson preparation or an occasional local inservice, in developing an ability to reach this significant portion of their students. And if that course was taken five or ten years ago, the landscape, approaches, and resources available for helping special needs students have changed significantly.

At times, religious educators are faced with situations regarding students with disabilities that shock them and disrupt the course of their teaching, while others notice small disruptions over time that build and occasionally escalate. Both types of experiences tend to leave them frustrated and, in many instances, feeling helpless. To illustrate, during the question-and-answer portion of a research forum for S&I, a teacher stepped to the microphone and related a very difficult experience he had recently experienced in the classroom regarding a student with disabilities. His situation had been uncomfortable to say the least, but the last thing he said was, “What should I have done?” That question is often on the minds of religious educators, but when it comes to reaching, helping, and responding to students with special needs, it is particularly poignant that, generally speaking, religious educators do not know where to turn during these situations, or before or after they arise. Nearly 75 percent of teachers indicate that they had, at one point or another, consulted with a special education teacher, and almost 40 percent had worked with an interpreter for American Sign Language, but beyond that, the majority of teachers had not made significant contact with any other related services or resources for students with disabilities, such as nurses, behavioral specialists, or adaptive program advisors. A significant portion (one half) of religious educators also indicated that they were not aware of S&I’s official policies regarding adapted classes and programs for students with disabilities. Most felt that they could benefit from additional support, training, or professional development.

Willingness to Include Students with Special Needs

Most religious educators (84 percent) indicated that they understand the principle of inclusion; however, only one half were in favor of including
students with disabilities in their traditional classrooms. Furthermore, as the level of special needs increases from mild to moderate to severe, that favorability decreases even more. It seems that this sentiment stems from the fact that only one-third of teachers feel they possess the skills necessary to successfully include students with disabilities. That is not surprising given that so few teachers have participated in formal education and training regarding inclusion. When given a set of specific individual special needs and asked to rate their willingness to include students with that particular disability (autism, emotional or behavioral disorders, intellectual disabilities, etc.) their responses were somewhat higher, ranging from 60- to over 90-percent willingness. But when asked to indicate their confidence level in doing so, only an average of 39 percent felt that they were competent enough to include them. All of this was still true even though a strong majority of educators indicated that they had had mostly positive experiences teaching and including students with special needs. These findings indicate that there is a general willingness but a lack of skill concerning the inclusion of students with disabilities.

**Relationships and Conclusions**

The research also lent itself to the discovery of some interesting correlations between certain categories of religious educators and the attitudes and perceptions they held. For instance, younger teachers tended to be less aware of the policies regarding students with disabilities; and those with higher levels of education were more likely to feel that they had the skills necessary to successfully include all the students in their classroom. When it came to teachers with more years of teaching experience, they felt more secure in their ability to manage behavioral problems related to students with disabilities but did not feel comfortable in their abilities to properly adapt materials and curriculum. Teachers with more years of experience incorporating students with disabilities were curiously less willing to consult with special education teachers or parents and generally felt less secure in their ability to work with parents of students with disabilities. It is difficult to know in this situation which one is pulling and which one is pushing. Are these teachers less willing to consult because they lack the confidence to interact with other leaders, or do they lack the confidence because they are less willing to do it? I also found that the few teachers who had completed university special education courses perceived they had the skills necessary to successfully include students with disabilities, were more secure in their ability to manage behavioral problems, and felt strongly that consultations with special education teachers or parents were beneficial. Ultimately, religious educators indicated that if they had participated in training related to teaching students with disabilities, they liked what they learned, were more likely to feel they had acquired adequate skill in the specific area trained on, and were more likely to attend additional special education trainings. There is hope that an increase in professional training could lead to a general increase of inclusionary skill among religious educators.

The information provided by these religious educators opened a candid doorway into the classrooms and offices of religious education that had previously been shut. Their responses are invaluable and teach us many lessons. For most religious educators, including students with special needs into their traditional classroom is not their first choice. Many indicate that they feel uncertain about whether they truly can achieve inclusion. Are students with disabilities provided a quality religious education and experience that meets the objectives we seek?
Progress Toward a Better Understanding of Teaching All Students

The path that lies ahead for religious education and inclusion of students with disabilities will have peaks and valleys. As we strive to increase the minds and capacities of all our students and infuse their lives with the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the blessings of the temple, and better preparation for exaltation, I suggest several recommendations for increasing the skill of religious educators to assist in this endeavor. Inservice programs and professional trainings should be developed and made available for religious educators. These programs should address the needs of specific disabilities and how to implement effective inclusion strategies. Highest on that priority list should be instruction and development of effective peer tutoring strategies, followed by special education techniques, behavioral management, and how to collaborate on issues related to disabilities. Curriculum projects in the future should enhance the ability of teachers to accommodate students with disabilities and incorporate further elements of universal design. Local administrators and teachers should be provided with education regarding the policies of their respective organization regarding adapted classes and programs so that needed resources may be utilized as they were intended.

Religious educators are doing the best they can to reach each of their students with all the knowledge, skills, and inspiration that they possess. They are hungry for and in need of assistance in understanding the nature of teaching those with disabilities and the resources available to them. In order to fulfill the desire that all of Heavenly Father’s children be included, we must continue to tread on a path that leads toward a better understanding of teaching all the students who come into our classes.

Notes

1. Data collected by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services’ Office of Special Education Programs indicated in 2008 that there were over 56,000 school-aged children involved in special education programs across the state of Utah. Almost 18,000 (31 percent) of those students with disabilities were secondary-education students. S&I reported in 2009 that 84,435 secondary-aged students were enrolled in Utah seminaries (Annual Report), with close to 11,000 students with disabilities among them.


As we travel through this life, we will individually be tried and stretched at times beyond what we feel are our breaking points.

The purpose of this paper is not to retell the stories of the handcart companies, one led by James G. Willie and another led by Edward Martin; many have done that very well. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to draw from their examples and experiences and find application for us today. Context, stories, and quotes of these pioneers are used here only in a supportive effort to identify principles, which can guide us today as we strive to live the gospel. President Gordon B. Hinckley stated, “Stories of their rescue need to be repeated again and again. They speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

The year 1997 was a year in which members of the Church paid special tribute to the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint pioneers. It marked 150 years since those faithful followers of Jesus Christ left their precious things, such as their homes, their temple, and in some cases, even family members. Seeking religious freedom and following a living prophet, they embarked on a westward journey which would teach lifelong lessons to all who had the courage to begin the trek and press forward faithfully. Speaking in the April 1997 general conference, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “The story of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies is a story of faith, of courage, of love, of sacrifice, of challenge, of relief—of salvation.”

The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies: Application and Insights into a Recurring Rescue

Jeffrey D. Meservy is an adjunct professor at Brigham Young University and Brigham Young University–Idaho (meservyje@byui.edu). He also serves as the director of the Taylorsville Institute adjacent to Salt Lake Community College (meservyjd@ldschurch.org).

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Apostles stated, “There are lessons for us in every footstep they took—lessons of love, courage, commitment, devotion, endurance, and, most of all, faith.”

Those lessons that Elder Ballard said were for us were first experienced and learned by them. One of the lessons learned by the individuals in the Willie and Martin handcart companies was that God was willing to stretch them individually beyond what they surely must have felt was their breaking point. These individuals were tried and stretched to a point where they experienced a dire, desperate need to be rescued, and they wholeheartedly relied on the hope that rescuers would come. At that point, they slowly but faithfully continued to press forward with a knowledge and understanding that they could not complete the journey on their own. Eventually, that physical rescue would come, and it would be more than a one-time, one-event, one-occurring rescue; rather, of necessity, it would have to be a recurring rescue. Wave after wave of rescue companies and individuals would be required to bring the handcart companies into the valley.

The personal experiences of individuals in the Willie and Martin handcart companies and the events that led up to the recurring rescue are full of lessons for each of us today. As we travel through this life, we will individually be tried and stretched at times beyond what we feel are our breaking points. We too will have moments in our lives where we will experience the dire and desperate need to be rescued spiritually, and we must learn to wholeheartedly rely on Jesus Christ and his Atonement. As Elder Ballard stated, “It will require every bit of our strength, wisdom, and energy to overcome the obstacles that will confront us. But even that will not be enough. We will learn, as did our pioneer ancestors, that it is only in faith—real faith, whole-souled, tested and tried—that we will find safety and confidence as we walk our own perilous pathways through life.”

Like the Pioneers, We Must Decide What Needs to Be Carried and What Needs to Be Discarded

After approximately four to six weeks at sea, traveling on four different ships, most of the individuals who would make up the Willie and Martin handcart companies arrived in New York and Boston; they then faced a roughly 1,000-mile journey to Iowa City, where they were outfitted with handcarts. Iowa City became a place of sacrifice for many; here, leaders assigned five people to a handcart, with each person being allotted only seventeen pounds of personal belongings to store in the cart. Already, before the handcart journey had even begun, many of these faithful Saints had to choose which personal items they would leave behind. John Jaques recorded the following in Iowa City, “This caused many heartaches, for many of the cherished articles brought from the old country were disposed of at great sacrifice.”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell stated, “So it is that real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the alter and letting it be consumed! Such is the sacrifice of love, courage, commitment, devotion, endurance, and, most of all, faith.”

It is worthwhile to note here that this deep personal sacrifice, this off-loading of excess “baggage,” preceded the recurring rescue that would later save the individuals in these companies. Elder Boyd K. Packer has analyzed the significance of the off-loading of excess baggage; he pointed out that, “everything taken at the outset, by these handcart pioneers was deemed indispensable,” but the “definition of indispensability was rapidly revised in the interest of survival and priorities established on the scale, size, weight, and immediate usefulness.”

Elder Packer then mentioned all sorts of things that were thrown away and asks why they did this. Answering his own question, he said, “Because they just could not carry it.” Elder Packer then quoted Isaac Foster, who pointed out the irony that “possessiveness compelled most of the immigrants to cling to their burdens until they wore out their teams.” Finally, Elder Packer taught a powerful lesson by quoting G. E. Peterson, who said, “To lighten up at the outset was our salvation.”

One lesson to be drawn from this event is that today, as we each walk our own perilous pathway through life, we must make personal, difficult decisions and at times sacrifices as we off-load our personal baggage: our own will, our own wants, and our own desires. Many times people choose to carry things that the Lord does not want them to carry. For example, an individual may choose to hang on to the hurt and pain caused by another individual, wearing out not their teams, but themselves, families, and friends. Jesus Christ and his Atonement enable us to continually off-load baggage that he does not want us to carry. Elder Neal A. Maxwell stated, “So it is that real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the alter and letting it be consumed! Such is the sacrifice
unto the Lord . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, (D&C 59:8), a prerequisite to taking up the cross, while giving ‘away all our sins’ in order to know God (Alma 22:18), for the denial of self precedes the full acceptance of Him.”10 This off-loading of baggage helps allow us to experience the spiritual, recurring rescue of the Atonement of Jesus Christ over and over throughout our life.

Daniel Spencer, who oversaw the handcart outfit operation at Iowa City, appointed James Willie to be the captain of the approximately 500 people and 120 handcarts that made up the Willie company. On 15 July 1856, the Willie company left Iowa City “in first rate spirits,”11 according to the company journal.

The Martin company left the Iowa City camp on 25 July 1856, ten days after the Willie company left. The first seven days after their departure were slow, and it wasn’t until 31 July that they traveled their farthest distance of seven miles. The earliest official count of the Martin company was made after combining with the Haven company in Nebraska under the direction of Elder Franklin D. Richards, who was returning home from presiding over the European mission. After the combining of the two companies, the Martin company consisted of 576 members.12

Historical Background: Willie Company from Iowa City to Sixth Crossing and Brigham’s Call to Rescue

From the beginning, there was an indication that the daily allowance of food was not sufficient. As they reached Florence, Nebraska, there was also a sense among some, such as Levi Savage and Milton Atwood, that they were too late in the season to proceed. Although some decided to stay in Florence, the vast majority decided to continue forward after their handcarts were all repaired and did so on 16 and 17 August. On 12 September, Franklin D. Richards, who had arrived in Florence about the same time as the Martin company, caught up to the Willie company at dusk. He visited with the Saints, cheering and buoying them up. But the next morning before leaving, he reprimanded Savage and Atwood for expressing their concerns about leaving so late in the season. The Willie company then broke camp and marched on towards Fort Laramie, maintaining an average pace of ten to twelve miles per day. They reached Fort Laramie on 30 September, having covered the approximate 500 miles from Florence in about forty-five days. During this time, six members of the company died, four of whom were over the age of sixty. Two days before arriving at Fort Laramie, Levi Savage recorded, “The old appear to be failing considerably.”13

Even though the measurement was not exact, Fort Laramie was considered to be the halfway point between Florence and Salt Lake City. The Willie company had left Florence with a sixty-day supply of flour. Looking ahead, “they had to travel another 509 miles to reach the Salt Lake Valley, a journey that would take 44 days if they continued at their normal pace. If they continued to consume their flour at the normal rate, the remaining supply would last for only about two weeks.”14 At Fort Laramie, the Willie company read a letter that had been left there for them by Elder Richards, stating that the company should not expect to receive supplies until they reached South Pass,15 which was 280 miles away, roughly twenty to twenty-five days if they could keep their current pace.

At this point, one can readily begin to see the situation beginning to unfold with the Willie company. There were hundreds of people on the highlands of Wyoming soon to be out of food. Considering these circumstances, one wonders how many people, animals, supplies, and food it would take to rescue 400–500 people.

On 2 October, in an effort to help stretch their flour supply, Willie company members voted to reduce their individual rations from one pound per day to three-quarters of a pound per day. They also resolved to travel faster. These decisions contributed to an increase in the death rate, with six people dying between 1 October and 4 October. Only six people had died during the previous forty-five days. It was at this time on 4 October that Franklin D. Richards arrived in the Salt Lake Valley and informed Brigham Young that there were still over 1,000 people out on the trail. Brigham Young had knowledge that additional handcart Saints had arrived in the United States, but he didn’t know that the emigration leaders had sent them forward out on the trail so late in the season. President Young later stated that if these leaders “would have thought and considered for one moment, they would have stopped those men, women, and children [at Florence] until another year.”16

The next day was 5 October, and President Young convened the general conference with a call for rescuers to go and help those late companies on the plains. He stated:

Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, . . . and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. . . .
At this point, one wonders if any of them imagined that the recurring rescue would continue for over two months as wave after wave of relief parties from the valley would eventually leave and make their way eastward.

On 10 October, five days after the conference concluded in the valley, the Willie company arrived at the Platte River Bridge, where they crossed the river later that day. The next fifty-mile stretch of trail would offer little water and terrible camping spots. It was during this stretch of the trail that Wilford Woodruff, traveling with the 1847 company, stated, “Our Camping place for the night was the most wretched of any ground we have found on the way. President Young thought it might properly be called Hell Gate.”

The Willie company arrived at the Sweetwater River on 14 October, just five days before the snow began to fall. It was here at Independence Rock that the Willie company members took inventory again of their situation and determined they had four days’ worth of flour; they would need to cut their rations again to ten ounces a day for men, nine ounces a day for women, six ounces a day for younger children, and three ounces for infants. They also calculated that if this flour was to last them to South Pass, they would have to increase their pace to twenty miles a day. Captain Willie must have realized that he was asking more and more of his people while providing them with less and less. This increase in demand, while providing less, continued in earnest the next day as the Willie company left Independence Rock on twice-reduced rations with a goal of twenty miles. They would cover only sixteen miles that first day, eleven miles the next day, and the third day, about ten miles; their strength was failing. The weather, however, was still cooperating on 17 October as temperatures remained mild during the day; but this was little consolation to individuals who were in need of food and worn down by hunger. John Chislett recorded that among his 100 men, he “could not raise enough men to pitch a tent when we encamped.”

On 18 October, the Willie company traveled eight miles, dispersed the last of their flour, and camped on the banks of the Sweetwater. The food that remained was a days’ worth of crackers that Captain Willie had purchased at Fort Laramie. The Willie company was fifty-six miles away from their hoped-for resupply at South Pass. If they could keep the pace of eight miles a day, they would arrive at South Pass in seven days on 25 October. However, the very following day, 19 October, a difficult test would begin. This testing would foster in their hearts and minds an absolute understanding of their need and desire to be rescued.

**Modern-Day Prophets Have Issued Calls to Rescue**

Speaking in the October 1991 general conference, President Hinckley, then serving as first counselor in the First Presidency, said:

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Now, I am grateful that today none of our people are stranded on the Wyoming highlands. But I know that all about us there are many who are in need of help and who are deserving of rescue. Our mission in life, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a mission of saving. There are the homeless, the hungry, the destitute. Their condition is obvious. We have done much. We can do more to help those who live on the edge of survival.

We can reach out to strengthen those who wallow in the mire of pornography, gross immorality, and drugs. Many have become so addicted that they have lost power to control their own destinies. They are miserable and broken. They can be salvaged and saved.

There are wives who are abandoned and children who weep in homes where there is abuse. There are fathers who can be rescued from evil and corrosive practices that destroy and bring only heartbreak.

It is not with those on the high plains of Wyoming that we need be concerned today. It is with many immediately around us, in our families, in our wards and stakes, in our neighborhoods and communities.”
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President Monson’s biography is entitled *To the Rescue*, and countless are the lessons and stories he has shared about reaching out to rescue.

**Martin Company from Iowa City to Deer Creek**

The Martin company’s journey after leaving Iowa was hampered by challenges, including death, weather, lost animals, handcart breakdowns, and grumblings in the group. Despite these challenges, their trip across Iowa took about the same amount of time as the Willie company had taken.

The Haven company arrived at Florence, Nebraska, on 19 August; the last of the Willie company had left two days prior. On 22 August, the Martin company arrived at Florence. After combining with the Haven company, the Martin company totaled 576 members and 146 handcarts. President Richards and his group would stay about two weeks, helping the companies prepare to leave Florence. The Martin company left Florence on 25 August. President Richards stayed in Florence until 3 September; he and his company would then average about thirty-five miles a day into the valley, riding in their light carriages and wagons.

While crossing Iowa, the Saints needed to carry only a month’s supply of flour and other provisions—enough to sustain them for 270 miles. When leaving Florence, the Saints needed at least twice as much flour—enough to sustain them for sixty days. Even though the wagons were already fully loaded, a 100-pound sack of flour was added to most of the handcarts. Extra luggage, camp gear, and tents were also packed in some carts. This extra weight put a tremendous strain on the handcarts, and they continued to break down.

The added weight also made the handcarts harder to pull. On 4 October, the Martin company passed Scotts Bluff, a prominent landmark in western Nebraska. They had walked 472 miles from Florence, but were still 559 miles from their destination. Four days later, on 8 October, the Martin company arrived at the halfway point of Fort Laramie, having traveled the approximate 500 miles from Florence in forty-five days, the same number of days it had taken the Willie company. The Martin company lost twenty members during this stretch of the trail.

Whatever hopes the Martin company members had with regards to purchasing much-needed supplies at Fort Laramie, they were soon tempered by stark reality. The cost of those items and the lack of funds the Saints had to purchase them were obstacles that were not to be overcome. Evidence of the need for more food can be found in the actions of some individuals while at the fort. Robert Mattinson recorded that he was able to “get nothing but a quart of corn.” In order to acquire some biscuits, bacon, and rice, John Jaques sold his watch.

Albert Jones recounts that he “sold an extra overcoat at Laramie to one of the cooks for some dried peaches, apples and a little bacon and some flour.” These efforts to obtain food, as well as a rationing of the entire camp’s food, show that those in the Martin company were well aware of their troublesome situation. The Martin company left Fort Laramie on 10 October, nine days after the Willie company had left.

On 17 October, the Martin company reached the pleasurable place of Deer Creek (current-day Glen Rock). Here, another decision was made that indicates the leaders’ keen awareness of a need to travel faster to encounter resupply wagons that they hoped were on their way. Captain Martin “advised the whole camp to lighten up their extra luggage . . . as much as possible, by discarding and burning every article of wearing apparel that could be dispensed with . . . except our best and warm coats, cloaks, etc.” John Jaques recorded, “owing to the growing weakness of emigrants and teams, the baggage including bedding and cooking utensils was reduced to 10 pounds per head, children under eight years five pounds. Good blankets and other bedding were burned as they could not be carried further, though needed more badly than ever for there was yet 400 miles of winter to go through.” Apart from the need to lighten the handcarts and move quicker, the reasons for burning these blankets are more understandable in light of the recently high temperatures. On 3 October, Jesse Haven recorded that the temperature was just over 112 degrees, and on 4 October, he recorded that the weather continued to be hot. On Saturday, the eighteenth the day after burning the blankets, John Jaques recorded it was a “cool fine day.” However, unbeknownst to them on this “fine day,” the very following day, 19 October, would begin a test for them like no other. Throughout this testing process, members of the Martin (and Willie) companies learned that God would test them beyond what they thought they could endure; according to journal entries many thought and felt that all was lost. At this breaking point, and not until this breaking point, did God intervene with a recurring rescue to bring them home.
A Recurring Rescue Unfolds: Comparison from Scripture and Applications for Today

As we study these events carefully and compare them to the experiences of others, we see that God has often allowed individuals to be tested beyond what they thought they could endure, and then, delivered them at the moment when they thought all was lost. For example, a careful reading of Genesis 22:9–12 shows that God took Abraham beyond what Abraham would certainly have considered his breaking point. Verse 9 reads, “And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.” Verse 10 continues, “And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.” Note that it doesn’t say he went forth to take the knife, or that he was about to take the knife. God waited until Abraham actually “took the knife.” After the knife was in hand and Abraham was ready to make the sacrifice, then, and not until then, did the angel of the Lord call unto him from heaven and say, “Abraham, Abraham: Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” Why did God wait for Abraham to take the knife? Surely God knew Abraham’s heart as they traveled to Mount Moriah; surely God knew Abraham’s heart as they walked up Mount Moriah; and surely God knew what was in Abraham’s heart as they built the altar. So why not tell him at any of those points along the way? Why was it necessary to wait for him to “take the knife”?

Elder Ballard gave some insight into this question when he recounted a visit that Brother Truman G. Madsen made to Israel with President Hugh B. Brown:

In a valley known as Hebron, where tradition has it that the tomb of Father Abraham is located, Brother Madsen asked President Brown, “What are the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?” After a short moment of thought, President Brown answered, “Posterity.” Brother Madsen writes: “I almost burst out, ‘Why, then, was Abraham commanded to go to Mount Moriah and offer his only hope of posterity? It was clear that [President Brown], nearly ninety, had thought and prayed and wept over that question before. He finally said, ‘Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham.'”

Elder Ballard summarized, “Sacrifice allows us to learn something about ourselves—what we are willing to offer to the Lord through obedience.” So perhaps God offered the rescuers and the members of the Willie and Martin handcart companies this experience so they could come to learn something about themselves that they could learn in no other way. Through this experience they each came to learn what they were willing to offer to the Lord through their obedience. This is important because the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “It is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God, . . . and that under these circumstances they can obtain faith necessary for him to lay hold on Eternal Life.” What a blessing to have that knowledge, but it is given only after a substantial price is paid.

The Willie Company

As the members of the Willie company members awoke on 19 October, one can only imagine that somewhere in their first few thoughts of the day was the recollection that they had doled out the last of the flour on the previous
day. The food that remained was a day’s worth of crackers that Captain Willie had purchased at Fort Laramie. Here, the members of the Willie company were faced with the absolute certainty that if help did not come, they would die on the plains. That morning, the trail geography necessitated a departure from the Sweetwater, where they were camped at the fifth crossing, and a trek of sixteen miles where they would meet the river again at the sixth crossing. Somewhere around Ice Spring, far from the desired destination of the sixth crossing, they encountered the snow storm that unleashed its fury.

The snow was accompanied by what John Chislett remembered as a “shrill wind [that] blew furiously.” He recalled that the snow fell several inches in a short period of time. “We dared not stop,” he said, “for we had a sixteen-mile journey to make, and short of it we could not get wood and water.” Even with a desire to keep moving, the company was forced by the storm to stop and wait it out. What goes through one’s mind on the high plains of Wyoming, held up by a storm, out of food and facing certain death? Where does one look for hope? In this case, it was to the dream of a fifteen-year-old boy by the name of George Cunningham. The previous night, George had the following dream:

Two men [came] toward us on horseback. They were riding very swiftly and soon came up to us. They said that they had volunteered to come to our rescue and that they would go on further east to meet a company which was still behind us and that on the morrow, we could meet a number of wagons loaded with provisions for us. They were dressed in blue soldier overcoats and had Spanish saddles on their horses. I examined them, particularly the saddles as they were new to me. I also could discern every expression of their countenance. They seemed to rejoice and be exceedingly glad that they had come to our relief and saved us.

Because of his dream, one can only imagine that George kept looking westward the following day. It wasn’t long before George cried out, “Here they come, see them coming over that hill.” Soon, Joseph A. Young and Cyrus Wheelock, the two men George had seen in his dream, were quickly coming towards them. Close behind them were Stephen Taylor and Abel Garr in a wagon. Joseph Elder stated, “They were Saviors coming to [our] relief.” This advanced party of rescuers let them know another rescue party was close behind with food and other badly needed supplies.

One may mistakenly assume that at this point the rescuers had arrived and the Willie company had been rescued. But what could these four express riders provide to the hundreds of members in the Willie company? With what food were they possibly going to fill their empty stomachs? A partial answer to this question came in the display of overjoyed men and women weeping and giving thanks to God and the rescuers themselves. Though there was not enough food to go around, these advanced rescuers filled them with hope! The recurring rescue, however, had just begun.

Captain James Willie was not content to wait for the rescue wagons to arrive. He and Joseph Elder left camp on 20 October and traveled close to thirty miles in search of the relief wagons, which they eventually found. The next morning, on 21 October, they returned with several covered wagons, each loaded with desperately needed supplies. Mary Hurren recalled, “If help had not come when it did, there would have been no one left to tell the tale.”

With the arrival of these additional rescuers and wagons filled with food, the casual observer may conclude that certainly now the Willie company had been rescued. But a more careful student will realize that the Lord would yet stretch the members of the Willie company. All members of this company would still be asked to sacrifice more than they had, and many more would make the ultimate sacrifice, for they had yet to face Rocky Ridge and Rock Creek Hollow.

Throughout the events of Rocky Ridge and Rock Creek Hollow, one sees the Lord again stretching his people beyond what they must have felt they were capable of enduring and then offering help on his timetable. Again, one can look to the scriptures to find an example of yet another time when the Savior did this. In 3 Nephi 1:9–13, we read, “There was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet.” Verses 10 and 11 continue, “when Nephi, the son of Nephi, saw this wickedness of his people, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful. . . . And it came to pass that he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth, and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the tradition of their fathers.” In response to Nephi’s prayer, the Savior said, “Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.” Why did the Lord wait until the people were about to be destroyed? Why did the Lord wait until the very night before he was to come into the world to give that piece of information to Nephi? Could not Nephi have benefited from that news a few weeks or months earlier? Certainly
Nephi’s heart had been exceedingly sorrowful for more than just that night. It is hard to believe that this was the first time Nephi had gone to the Lord in prayer for and in behalf of his people.

Some insight is given to these questions by Wendy Watson Nelson, who shared examples from the scriptures of people who were “desperate for the Savior to heal them, help them, cleanse them, guide them, protect them, and save them.”52 Sister Nelson states, “Desperation can actually be a great motivator. Clearly the Prophet Joseph Smith experienced intense desperation in Liberty Jail. He pled with the Lord, ‘O God, where art thou?’ Because of such intense spiritual desperation, the Prophet received some of the most sublime revelations of this dispensation.”53 She continued, “When we’re desperate to be guided by heaven, we work harder than ever to tune in to heaven.”54

Nephi and the handcart pioneers, including George Cunningham, were in desperate situations, and perhaps it is possible that when George offered his desperate prayer that night before retiring to his bed, he was motivated to pray with greater faith than he had ever done before in his life. Perhaps Nephi did the same. Perhaps our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, allow times of desperation to occur in our lives so that we can learn to exercise faith beyond our usual calm, contented, comfortable efforts.

The Martin Company

Nathan Porter recalls that while waiting to cross the Platte River for the final time, those waiting to cross “huddled together like sheep”55 in an attempt to shield themselves from the wind and the cold. Elizabeth Jackson recalled, “We had scarcely crossed the river when we were visited with a tremendous storm of snow, hail, sand and fierce winds.”56 This last crossing of the Platte River ushered in for the Martin company what Samuel Jones referred to as “one long funeral march.”57 On 20 October, before the Martin company could move forward, those who died during the night had to be buried. Elizabeth Jackson records that her husband was wrapped in a blanket and buried with thirteen others.58 Journal entries attest that the weather continued to be miserable for the entire day. The Martin company traveled only a few miles on the twenty-first and rested all day on the twenty-second. They then proceeded on the twenty-third and traveled a distance of five miles to Bessemer Bend. It took them four days to travel ten miles. Travel was slow and they moved only a little, but they were pressing forward. In their suffering they found themselves in the company of another who suffered greatly. In Gethsemane, Christ “went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.”59 Even the Creator of worlds without number had reached a point where he moved forward only a little, demonstrating to us that in this life it’s about direction and destination not acceleration. Here, at Bessemer Bend, is where the Martin company remained for the next six days. At this point, their situation was dire. Flour rations were reduced to eight ounces for adults and four ounces for children.60 Louisa Mellor remembered the day, 28 October, at Bessemer Bend when “Captain Martin said there was only enough flour to last one more day.”61 At prayer meeting on Sunday, 16 October, John Rodwell, a fifty-five-year-old carpenter from Suffolk, related a dream that the people would encounter rescuers at about noon on Tuesday or Wednesday. Josiah Rogerson, a member of the Martin company, recalled Rodwell as saying, “I saw a mule, packed with blankets and cooking utensils, come right in the middle of our camp, as we are now, followed by three Californians, wear[ing] blue soldier overcoats, riding mules or horses. They stopped and told us of teams and relief from the valley, after which we started again on our journey.”62

One can only imagine the talk that prevailed in camp for the next two days before the advanced rescuers arrived. Elizabeth Jackson, whose husband had died a few days earlier, leaving her with three children, went to bed on Monday, 27 October, fearing the absolute worst. However, that night she dreamed that her recently deceased husband stood by her side and said, “Cheer up, Elizabeth deliverance is at hand.”63 Louisa Mellor recalled that on Tuesday, 28 October, “We all gathered around, . . . praying God to help us, as we knew it was him alone who could deliver us from death.”64 Here, with the food all but gone and deaths occurring daily, the Martin company knew with certainty that only God could save them. Certainly, they must have felt that at any moment they could perish and knew that without rescuers, eventually they would perish. Joseph Smith experienced similar feelings, which he recorded in his history: “I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God . . . Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed . . . as if I were doomed to sudden destruction . . . at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction . . . just at this moment of great alarm . . . I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound.”65 Here is another example of the Savior stretching someone to their limits, allowing Joseph to arrive at the very moment where it seemed death and destruction
were eminent. Why? Certainly God knew what was in Joseph’s heart when he read James 1:5; certainly God knew what was in his heart as he walked to the grove; and certainly God knew what was in his heart as he began to pray. So why did he need to have the experience that he had in the grove? Elder Robert D. Hales offered some insight when he shared the following after recovering from serious health challenges. He stated:

On a few occasions, I told the Lord that I had surely learned the lessons to be taught and that it wouldn’t be necessary for me to endure any more suffering. Such entreaties seemed to be of no avail, for it was made clear to me that this purifying process of testing was to be endured in the Lord’s time and in the Lord’s own way. … I also learned that I would not be left alone to meet these trials and tribulations but that guardian angels would attend me. There were some that were near angels in the form of doctors, nurses, and most of all my sweet companion, Mary. And on occasion, when the Lord so desired, I was to be comforted with visitations of heavenly hosts that brought comfort and eternal reassurances in my time of need.66

Francis Webster of the Martin company offered his testimony of not being left alone when he declared:

I have pulled my hand cart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said I can go only that far and there I must give up for I cannot pull the load through it. I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the Angels of God were there.67

Perhaps God takes us to the breaking point so that he can teach us, as he taught Joseph, Elder Hales, and Francis Webster, that we do not walk alone, that angels, both seen and unseen, are there to comfort us, and that he is able to deliver us from any situation.

On 28 October, around midday, three express riders arrived in camp. These riders were Joseph A. Young, Daniel W. Jones, and Abel Garr. Again, one may be tempted to believe that because the rescuers had arrived, the Martin company had been rescued. But, as with the Willie company, these few express riders could give little in the way of material goods to the hundreds of members in the company. Again, they filled them with the one supply of which there was plenty to go around: hope. The arrival of these men had “put new life into the people.”68 At this point, however, the recurring rescue for the Martin company had just begun.

After holding up for six days at Bessemer Bend, the Martin company would finally move out on 29 October. Samuel Openshaw recalled that “the last of the flour was all ate.”69 The company traveled two days and arrived at Greasewood Creek on 31 October in the evening. Here, they encountered more rescuers, relief wagons, and several fires to keep them warm. With the arrival at Greasewood Creek and the additional relief wagons, food, and rescuers, one may be tempted to conclude that the Martin company had finally been rescued. Yet as with the Willie company, the Lord would still stretch the people in the Martin company. All members of this company would yet be asked to sacrifice more than they had, and many more would make the ultimate sacrifice. The members of the Martin company still had to cross the Sweetwater River and then face Martin’s Cove.

Here in mortality, it is not sufficient to have an experience with the Atonement of Jesus Christ and be rescued from our sins only once. Just as wave after wave of rescuers continued to come from the valley, we too must continually seek for the rescuing and enabling power of the Atonement throughout our lives. Our need to be rescued spiritually is a need to be rescued through a recurring rescue similar to the physical rescue of the Willie and Martin handcart companies. Part of that recurring rescue will involve God stretching us to realms we would not choose to go on our own. Preaching to the Twelve in Nauvoo, Joseph stated “that the Lord would get hold of their heart strings and wrench them, and that they would have to be tried as Abraham was tried and Joseph said that if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham’s feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so.”70 John Taylor also commented on this teaching from the Prophet Joseph when he said, “Did you ever know it is necessary that we should be tried in all things? If you do not you will find it out before you get through, and we are not through yet quite. … In this connection, I am reminded of what I heard the Prophet Joseph say, speaking more particularly with reference to the Twelve, ‘The Lord will feel after your heart strings, and will wrench them and twist them around, and you will have to learn to rely upon God and upon God alone.’”71

When called to pass through these experiences, we must remember, “God afflicts his people artistically. His is never a random blow. Only marvelous skill lies in the Lord’s Chastening. Affliction in our youth may be intended for the ripening of our old age. Today’s affliction may have no meaning for today; it may be designed for circumstances fifty years ahead . . . The mighty God
takes mighty time to work His grand results.”72 It is through this recurring rescue that God works his grand results.

Elder Ballard spoke of standing on the hill and looking out over the area where the rescuers first saw the Willie company and then stated, “I contemplated the joy that will fill our hearts when we fully come to know the eternal significance of the greatest rescue—the rescue of the family of God by the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is through Him that we have promise of eternal life. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of spiritual power that will give you and me the assurance that we have nothing to fear from the journey.”73

Notes
15. Chislett, “Narrative,” 120. Chislett recalls this letter coming about the time the Willie company was near Independence Rock. However, it mostly likely came while they were at Fort Laramie. William Woodward’s journal entry for 29 September tells of James Willie receiving a letter from Elder Richards at Fort Laramie. Levi Savage’s journal entries for 4 and 6 October mention that the company couldn’t be certain of resupply until they reached Pacific Springs—just west of South Pass. The letter mentioned by Woodward is the most likely source for the information that Levi Savage recorded.
19. Lucy Mersev Smith, Original Historical Narrative of Lucy Mersev Smith, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies

22. Mormon Handcart, 50.
23. Mormon Handcart, 50.
28. Mormon Handcart, 44.
31. Bell, Life History and Writings of John Jaques, 141.
34. Bell, Life History and Writings of John Jaques, 144; see also William Binder, journal, 17 October 1856, Church History Library.
36. Bell, Life History and Writings of John Jaques, 144.
44. Chislett, “Narrative,” 322.
47. Joseph Elder, diary, 26, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.
49. 3 Nephi 1:9.
50. 3 Nephi 1:10–11; emphasis added.
51. 3 Nephi 1:13; emphasis added.
52. Wendy Watson Nelson, “Becoming the Person You Were Born to Be” (CES devotional address, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, 10 January 2016), 1.
59. Mark 1:35.
61. Louisa Mellor Clark, “Autobiographical Sketch,” 5, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Salt Lake City. William Binder recalled this meeting being held on the morning of 28 October, the day the express rescuers arrived. He wrote, “During the morning of the 28th our Captain had rallied the camp as was our custom every day to meet for general Prayers, and while there he made know to the Saints the startling fact that our provisions had nearly exhausted. he informed us that if we were willing to reduce our amount of flour to one half of what it then was there would be enough to last us two days which he proposed we do[,] we accepted the proposition not knowing where or when we should have another supply. A few minutes after the meeting was dispersed our hearts were made glad with the appearence of three bretheren who had come as an express from the relief company who were Stationed at Devils Gate. It is impossible to describe the joy and gratitude that filled every heart upon the arrival of such messengers of Salvation.” William Lawrence Spicer Binder, “Reminiscences,” Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
S&I In-Service Meetings: A Global Perspective

PO NIENT (FELIPE) CHOU

In-service meetings have facilitated the opportunity for the Seminaries and Institutes (S&I) to teach and train both full-time and volunteer teachers for many decades. These S&I in-service meetings would expand from Utah to the rest of the United States and then to various locations outside the United States. How are these in-service meetings operating and functioning in various parts of the world? What are the perceptions of S&I leaders and teachers regarding how these in-service meetings assist them to achieve the S&I objective and goals? This article examines these questions from a global perspective. It also considers a global perspective of S&I leaders and teachers on how these in-service meetings assist them to achieve the S&I objective and its purpose, “To help the youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.”

According to Administer Appropriately: A Handbook for CES Leaders and Teachers, training “intends to improve an individual’s ability to apply correct principles and to use fundamental skills.” In addition, in-service training...
promotes professional growth and develop[s] . . . individual potential . . . help[ing] leaders and teachers better understand and meet the objectives of religious education and fulfill their commission to live the gospel, teach effectively, and administer appropriately. Training also provides renewal, motivation, and helps foster cooperative associations.” Nevertheless, “for training to be complete, leaders and teachers should evaluate whether the training has fulfilled the intended objectives or goals.”

Methods
The S&I Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (REA) conducted an evaluation to provide a global perspective of in-service meetings in 2011. A purposeful cluster-convenience sample was utilized to identify 18 S&I areas selected for this study. Qualitative data through telephone or online interviews were gathered from 40 S&I personnel in selected cluster areas (see table 1). These interviews were 20–40 minutes long and conducted in English, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, or Spanish. The S&I employees interviewed for this study came from a wide range of S&I assignments (e.g., area director, assistant to the area director, regional/country director, coordinator, institute teacher/director, and seminary teacher/principal).

Thereafter, an online survey was developed and administered to gather additional quantitative data. A total of 12 S&I released-time teachers or principals and 62 S&I country directors or coordinators in the 18 S&I areas were selected and received the online survey. These 74 S&I employees were invited to complete the survey, as well as distribute the survey and solicit responses from the 3 to 4 full-time or stake-called teachers they supervised. The online survey was available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish to facilitate access to additional stake-called volunteer teachers. Participants received an email with a link to the online survey in 2011, followed by a reminder email to complete the survey. The S&I Office of REA received a total of 148 responses to the online survey from an estimated 260 potential survey participants. Of the 148 responses, there were 66 S&I employees and 82 stake-called teachers (or 45 and 55 percent respectively). Interview and survey data were organized, compared, and analyzed, followed by a report to present findings and recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>S&amp;I Areas</th>
<th>Telephone or online interviews</th>
<th>S&amp;I employees receiving online survey*</th>
<th>Online survey responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>Utah Valley South</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utah Weber</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>US East</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US California North</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Africa Southeast</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Africa West</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asia North</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe East</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South America North</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South America South</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 areas</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A total of 74 S&I employees (principals or coordinators) completed the online survey, and also distributed the online survey to 3–4 S&I employees or stake-called teachers they supervised.
How are Faculty In-services Operating and Functioning at Various S&I Programs?

Frequency of In-Service Meeting
Worldwide, S&I employees typically had area in-service meetings 1–2 times per year, cluster or regional had them 2–3 times per year, and local faculty had them 5–6 times per year (see table 2). It was typical for S&I employees in Utah to have in-service meetings more frequently than others in the United States and Canada, and in-service trainings were also more frequent inside the US and Canada rather than outside. For stake-called teachers, in-service trainings were provided to them once a month in most cases.

Table 2: Frequency of in-service meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S&amp;I employee</th>
<th>Utah</th>
<th>US &amp; Canada</th>
<th>Outside US &amp; Canada</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Central America</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Pacific</th>
<th>South America</th>
<th>Worldwide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area in-service</td>
<td>4–5 times/year</td>
<td>2–3 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster/Regional in-service</td>
<td>5–6 times/year</td>
<td>4–5 times/year</td>
<td>1–3 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>1–3 times/year</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>1–3 times/year</td>
<td>2–3 times/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local faculty in-service</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>5–6 times/year</td>
<td>5–6 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>3–4 times/year</td>
<td>1–2 times/year</td>
<td>3–4 times/year</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>8–9 times/year</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stake-called teacher’s local in-service</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>8–9 times/year</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency of In-Service Attendance
Overall, the frequency of in-service meeting attendance was higher for S&I employees than for stake-called teachers, and higher inside the US and Canada rather than outside (see table 3). Frequency of in-service meeting attendance for S&I employees was highest in Utah (100 percent), followed by other areas in the US and Canada (82–92 percent), and lowest outside the US and Canada (78–87 percent). Frequency of in-service meeting attendance for S&I stake-called teachers was also higher inside the US and Canada than outside (94 percent and 77 percent respectively). In addition, there was much more variability for stake-called teachers outside the US and Canada.

Table 3: Frequency of in-service meeting attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S&amp;I employee</th>
<th>Utah</th>
<th>US &amp; Canada</th>
<th>Outside US &amp; Canada</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Central America</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Pacific</th>
<th>South America</th>
<th>Worldwide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area in-service</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster/Regional in-service</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local faculty in-service</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stake-called teacher’s local in-service</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Attendance frequencies are estimates at best and are based on survey responses.

Respondents indicated they were unable to attend in-service training for the following reasons: work and calling scheduling conflicts, distance, or other personal issues. One stake-called teacher said, “I attend about 75 percent of all in-service training due to my work schedule.” Another reported, “I need to go about 100 kilometers exclusively just to attend the in-services.” Others noted scheduling conflicts as follows: “Most in-service meetings . . . [are] on Saturdays, which sometimes conflicts with other ward assignments, meetings, or personal issues,” and “Some of our in-service meetings are held during our stake leadership meetings because our stake is geographically large, but I also hold a stake calling . . . so I miss those [in-service trainings].”
**Length of In-Service Meetings**

Generally, S&I teachers reported that the length of in-service meetings were shorter for those inside the US and Canada (see table 4). In addition, in-service meetings for stake-called teachers were typically between one and three hours, while in-service meetings for S&I employees were longer.

**Table 4: Length of in-service meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area in-service</th>
<th>Cluster/Regional in-service</th>
<th>Local faculty in-service</th>
<th>Stake-called teacher's local in-service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>2–4 days</td>
<td>1–2 hours</td>
<td>No report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>1–3 days</td>
<td>1–3 hours</td>
<td>1–1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>2–4 days</td>
<td>1–4 days</td>
<td>1 hour–4 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2–4 days</td>
<td>1 hour–4 days</td>
<td>1–3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>1–3 days</td>
<td>1 hour–4 days</td>
<td>2–3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>2–4 days</td>
<td>1 hour–1 days</td>
<td>1–3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>2–4 days</td>
<td>1 hour–4 days</td>
<td>1–3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>2–4 days</td>
<td>1 hour–1 day</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>1–4 days</td>
<td>US (1–3 hours)</td>
<td>US (1–1.5 hours)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There appeared to be a correlation between the frequency and length of in-service meetings. In the US and Canada, frequency was higher and length was shorter. Outside the US and Canada, the reverse was true; frequency was lower and length was longer. Qualitative interviews suggested that distance was a key factor. The farther teachers were geographically, the more likely that the frequency of in-service meetings decreased and length of the meeting increased.

**Modes Used to Provide In-Service Training**

Respondents were asked to mark all the modes—in person, over the phone, video conference, etc.—used to provide in-service training. About 99 percent of respondents indicated that in-service trainings were given in person. Some also indicated that in-service trainings were provided by telephone, skype or video conference, emails, and online training modules (see table 5). There was no significant difference between the S&I employee and stake-called volunteer teachers in regards to mode of in-service meetings, except for online training modules.

**Table 5: Mode used to provide in-service training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In Person</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Skype or video conf.</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Online training modules*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only S&I employees who were surveyed accessed online training modules

According to the survey, only S&I employees accessed online training modules for in-service training. However, interviews with coordinators in the US indicated that online training for new stake-called teachers was very important to help them train new teachers that did not attend preservice or in-service training. Interview data with coordinators also suggested that online resources could be used to communicate administrative matters with stake-called teachers online, thus allowing for more modeling and practicing of teaching skills during face-to-face in-service meetings. A coordinator shared that the “online training for new teachers is great! [I] have them all attend the new teacher online training. . . . We are spread out and we don’t have all the volunteer teachers in one place, so the online in-service for new
teachers is great! That is what I point them to and [I] have them do the training online.”

Time Spent on In-Service Training Items

Worldwide, in-service meetings spent 16 percent of the time allotted on administrative matters, 27 percent on content mastery, 28 percent on explaining teaching skills, and 29 percent on modeling and practicing teaching skills (see table 6). There was no significant difference between responses from S&I employees and stake-called teachers in regards to the time spent on each training item. In addition, teachers generally agreed that the appropriate time was spent on each item (see table 7).

Table 6: Time spent on in-service training items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Area</th>
<th>Administrative matters</th>
<th>Content mastery</th>
<th>Teaching skills: explaining</th>
<th>Teaching skills: modeling &amp; practicing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
<td>No report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;I employee</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stake-called teacher</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S&I teachers said, “I believe that the time we spent for in-service was very [well] used,” and “I believe that the time allocation was adequate.” However, some respondents wished for more time for content mastery, while others expressed a desire for more time with modeling and practicing teaching skills. S&I teachers explained that “less time should be used in administrative matters and more time is needed for content mastery,” and that “more time can be spent in modeling and practicing teaching skills.”

Table 7: Rating of appropriate time spent on in-service training items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate time is spent on . . .</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (4)</th>
<th>Disagree (3)</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree (2)</th>
<th>Agree (1)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (0)</th>
<th>Weighted average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>administrative items</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content mastery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explaining teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modeling and practicing teaching skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are the Perceptions of S&I Leaders and Teachers Regarding How These In-Service Meetings Assist Them to Achieve the S&I Objective and Goals?

In-Service Meeting Ratings

Overall, all respondents agreed that in-service meetings helped them accomplish the S&I objective and goals, met their needs and expectations, and shared materials that were pertinent and useful (see table 8). Respondents also agreed that in-service meetings facilitated networks with other teachers, inspired and motivated them, and helped them to be a more effective teacher.
Table 8: In-service meeting ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-service meetings . . .</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (0)</th>
<th>Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree (2)</th>
<th>Agree (3)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (4)</th>
<th>Weighted average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>. . . help me to accomplish the S&amp;I objective and goals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . meet my needs and expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . facilitate networks with other teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . help to inspire and motivate me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . help me to be a more effective teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . shared materials that were pertinent and useful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . shared materials on the S&amp;I website are helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . shared materials that are easily accessible on the S&amp;I website</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews also revealed that coordinators felt isolated and looked to in-service meetings with other S&I employees as a time to network and feel connected. A coordinator explained that “coordinators are isolated and alone a lot. Great thing [it] is to get together with others and to bounce ideas. . . . When we get together . . . you are lifted, you gather new knowledge on administrative, content mastery, etc. . . . Is it worth the time to get together? Yes, definitely. . . . When we get together as a cluster or area, it is huge and a big deal!” Moreover, interviews revealed that coordinators desired additional help and preparation before becoming the in-service meeting leader. One coordinator said, “I wished someone had modeled in-service for me. . . . New coordinators need more training before they go out to coordinate. . . . instead of leaving us on our own to figure it out.”

The ease of accessibility of materials on the S&I website received the lowest rating (a weighted average of 2.85 out of 4). Many were grateful and positive about in-service training and the resources available, however, there were also many concerns over the accessibility of S&I materials and the availability of translated materials on the S&I website to assist with in-service trainings and other needs. One coordinator said, “The in-service materials [on] the web site are easily accessible, but the majority of what we could use are not translated.” Another coordinator added, “I [am] so grateful for in-service training; it’s help[ed] me to be [a] better . . . S&I teacher so I can learn with my teachers and materials [on] the website. Sometimes it’s hard because it [is] all in English, so I have to translate so I can give [it] to all [the] teachers.”

The majority of these concerns came from stake-called teachers in the US or those outside the US. Respondents’ concerns regarding the accessibility of the S&I website related to the ease of accessibility of resources by stake-called teachers in the US, or availability and timeliness of translated materials outside the US. In Africa, for example, they would still prefer printed materials and a DVD due to internet connectivity issues. One teacher explained it as follows, “I am not able to download or use any video or audio resources offered on my equipment. I often have problems with internet connection and find the procedure frustrating. I therefore rely mainly on the written materials provided, my own study skills and experience, and prayer.”

Overall Impression and Suggestions

Overall, S&I employees and stake-called teachers rated in-service meetings as “good” or “very good,” giving a total weighted average of 3.86 out of 5 (see table 9). They also shared their desire for more modeling and practicing of teaching skills. A coordinator said, “We should do more of modelling and practice. Then we could visit one-on-one with our teachers and listen to them.” Another teacher concurred by adding, “I feel it will be more helpful if more time is devoted to [the] practice of teaching, and if in-service materials will be given in advance for teachers to prepare, that will improve the quality of teachers also.”
Table 9: Overall in-service meeting rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S&amp;I employee rating of in-service</th>
<th>Very poor (0)</th>
<th>Poor (1)</th>
<th>Average (2)</th>
<th>Good (3)</th>
<th>Very Good (4)</th>
<th>Excellent (5)</th>
<th>Weighted average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stake-called teacher rating of in-service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total rating of in-service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, feedback from respondents was coded and grouped into various categories. The most common suggestions are listed below in order of most frequently coded responses. Thereafter, these responses were further segmented to highlight area-specific suggestions. Overall coded responses were ranked and included:

- Simplify resources on S&I website to make materials more practical for new converts and volunteer teachers.
- Provide translated materials in a timely manner and communicate when they are available, thus avoiding need for materials to be translated locally.
- Provide training for new coordinators on how to conduct meaningful in-service training that fits local circumstances.
- Limit isolation for those in remote areas by providing opportunities to interact with other colleagues through online forums to share and post ideas (e.g., Yammer).
- Consider various internet challenges and provide video files that can be downloaded for some areas, or DVDs instead of online materials for areas without internet access.
- Improve search function, facilitating ability to quickly and effectively find resources in the S&I website (primarily in the US and Canada).

Area-Specific Suggestions from US and Canada

In the US and Canada, the top suggestions included improving the search function on the S&I website, limiting isolation for those in remote areas, and providing training for new coordinators on how to conduct meaningful in-service training.

An area director in a US Utah area said it was difficult “not knowing where things are” on the website and indicated that improving the search function would be helpful. A coordinator in the US East area added, “I enjoy having great resources of talks and other presentations . . . [but] it is not always easy to find these resources in a quick and efficient way.” In regards to limiting isolation, a coordinator in Canada said, “I look forward to faculty in-service as it permits me to observe other perspectives . . . I serve in a remote location by myself and so any interaction with colleagues is welcome and enriching. . . . [We need] more regular interaction between colleagues and sharing of resources and ideas.”

A seminary principal in a US Utah area recommended that S&I could continue to “provide models and presentations that could be used for in-service discussions, practice, developing skills, etc.” A coordinator in the US East area said he “wished someone had modeled in-service for me. New coordinators need more training before they go out to coordinate.” A coordinator in the US California North area said, “Continue to provide information that others are finding successful to help us in our areas.”

Outside the US and Canada

Outside the US and Canada, the bulk of their suggestions included the simplification, accessibility, and timely translation of materials on the S&I website to support in-service meetings and stake-called volunteer teachers. Their comments included, “Please offer materials and software for in-service translated in my language so that we can use it for our local in-service,” and “There are a lot of materials that are only in English, and as you put materials in Spanish it will be a great help to us, all the talks, class materials, etc.” Others added, “I’d like to have [S&I broadcasts] in Thai, maybe in the message so I can use [them] in my in-service training because . . . my teachers can’t speak English,” and “The only thing I can think is to have more materials in Portuguese about teaching to share with our volunteers—some kind of online training for teachers in Portuguese, as we already have in English.”
Area-Specific Suggestions from Africa

Simplifying resources on the S&I website and consideration for internet challenges were the two most common suggestions from Africa. The Africa Southeast area director indicated that "most teachers [in Africa] are converts and don’t have advanced education beyond high school." He also added that "internet based in-service ... is not accessible, and 90 percent [of volunteer teachers in Africa] don’t have access to internet, so this module does not work; logging in to find things does not work, cost[s] teachers too much to access the internet, and they don’t have money for it. . . . [We] don’t need more; there will be more confusion. Simplicity would be better.”

Area-Specific Suggestions from Asia and the Pacific

In Asia and the Pacific, the most common suggestions included simplifying resources on the S&I website, providing translated materials in a timely manner, providing training for new coordinators, and considering various internet challenges for certain locations.

The Asia area director said that the "S&I website is too complicated. . . . [A] search function would be helpful. . . . [The] website is too much for our coordinators.” He also added, “[Online in-service trainings are] helpful to those who understand English really well. . . . [The] resources are wonderful, but [they have not been] available in different languages for coordinators and volunteer teachers in Thai, Chinese (Mandarin & Cantonese), Cambodia, Mongolian, and Indonesia.” A coordinator in Taiwan said, “[We need] talks of Apostles at beginning of the year, like Elder Bednar’s would be most helpful, but no Chinese translation, so we end up translating locally to provide for the students in our area. . . . Translation always comes late for us to use . . . even short videos we don’t have [a] translation for. . . . [We] never know when the translation comes. . . . [One] has to check the website to see, [but] we don’t have time to keep looking.”

According to the coordinator in Hong Kong, new coordinators "are struggling to know what to do in their preschool and in-service training. . . . I think our coordinators need help in how to provide monthly meaningful teacher training. . . . We know the objectives and goals . . . [but we need] support in terms of mastering the content, modeling, [and] training on interpersonal skills. . . . The online training does not fit into our local circumstances always.”

A coordinator in Asia suggested an online forum to help share "some case studies [and] success stories.”

Area-Specific Suggestions from Central and South America

The most common suggestions from those in Central and South America included similar suggestions from other areas. These included simplifying resources on the S&I website and providing translated materials in a timely manner. In addition, these respondents recognized the isolation experienced by those in remote areas and suggested online forums, such as Yammer.

The regional director for Brazil South explained the challenge and need to simplify resources as follows: “[The] biggest challenge for the volunteer teachers is that they have their day-to-day work, family, etc. . . . It needs to make things easier, simplify . . . [and] make it practical.” For example, he noted that “attendance report is difficult and . . . [needs to be] simpler for the teachers.” He also said in regards to materials and resources that “if not in Portuguese, then there is nothing for them. . . . They want it in Portuguese, not English.” A coordinator and institute director in Costa Rica said they “need videos in Spanish to use for teacher in-service . . . the training online for teachers is great, but it is only in English. This limits the majority of our teachers to be able to gain help from it.” A coordinator in Honduras said that “by not having them available in Spanish, these valuable resources are of little help.” A coordinator in El Salvador said that it would be “a huge help if you could translate many of the messages.”

Area-Specific Suggestions from Europe

Specific suggestions from Europe focused on providing translated materials in a timely manner, limiting isolation for those in remote areas, and providing
training for new coordinators on how to conduct meaningful in-service training.

An area director in Europe noted that “many [videos and broadcasts are] not available in time for the school year to start. . . . Other languages will [be] provided later, but no timeline to know when, or announcement when it will come. . . . [We] end up doing local translation; then it is translated twice.” He added that “[the] best translation [is] when it is live, because [we] don’t know when it will come. . . . If [the broadcast] is for volunteer teachers, [we] need [it] in languages.” The area director in the Europe East area reported that “many don’t get on the online training because their English is not very good. . . . [The] website is improving, but [is] very confusing still how to use. . . . [For] 450 volunteer teachers, most don’t speak English.” He also explained his use of “phone call or skype or video . . . [because] many coordinators feel lonely and isolated, so it is important to keep in touch.” Finally, the coordinator in Bulgaria said, “I would like to see in-service meetings for volunteer teachers in other areas, especially where we have a daily program with stake-called teachers. Maybe videos of such meetings could help us to get new ideas.”

Summary

S&I in-service training meetings are an important and integral part of helping seminary and institute teachers to “elevate Gospel teaching and learning” and in “teaching in the Savior’s way.” The findings from this study helped to better understand how these in-service meetings are operating and functioning globally, while also exploring the perception of S&I leaders and teachers regarding how these in-service meetings assist them to achieve the S&I objective and goals.

In the US and Canada, in-service meetings for S&I employees are held more frequently and are shorter in length than those outside the US and Canada. Globally, time spent during in-service meetings includes 16 percent of the time on administrative matters, 27 percent on content mastery, 28 percent on explaining teaching skills, and 29 percent modeling and practicing teaching skills. Teachers generally agreed that appropriate time was spent on each training item. They also felt that it helped them accomplish the S&I objective and goals and met their needs and expectations, and that materials shared were pertinent and useful. The lowest rating was for the S&I website (a weighted average of 2.85 out of 4) due to accessibility of resources and concerns over the timeliness and availability of translated materials.

Notwithstanding, overall quality of in-service training was rated as “good” or “very good.”

A global overview also indicated that in-service meetings were typically held monthly for stake-called teachers—nearly all in person. Attendance was generally lower for stake-called teachers than S&I employees due to distance, work, Church callings, and other demands on their time. Some areas used telephone, video conference, or online training on a limited basis to provide additional training and support.

Overall feedback from S&I leaders and teachers worldwide provided the following suggestions to help improve local in-service meetings. First, simplify the S&I website to further facilitate accessibility of online materials for new converts and volunteer teachers. Second, continue to improve the timeliness and availability of translated materials on the S&I website to benefit those outside the US. Third, provide more training for new coordinators on how to conduct meaningful in-service training that fits local circumstances. Next, use new and existing technology to help S&I leaders and teachers share and stay connected, thus reducing isolation and improving in-service training opportunities. Finally, recognize that certain areas may need DVDs instead of online materials due to limited or lack of internet access.

Efforts from those at the S&I Central Office continue to help S&I teachers globally. These include efforts to redesign and simplify the S&I website and translate new teacher training and other online resources into a number of languages. These and other efforts help to address some of the challenges experienced by study participants, further expanding the access and use of online training resources for S&I teachers globally. Ultimately, efforts to improve in-service trainings are “intended to improve teaching, increase gospel knowledge, and help teachers learn how to administer in seminaries and institutes.”

Notes

1. Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, The Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009).
3. The Church Education System, Administering Appropriately: A Handbook for CES Leaders and Teachers (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 54.
The Prophet taught, "I will inform you that it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church or any one to receive instruction for those in authority higher than themselves."

In early 1833, the presiding elder of a small branch in Benson, Vermont, wrote to his brother at Church headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio, hoping to receive guidance from Joseph Smith on a very important question: How do I know what teachings in my branch I should accept as doctrine? He was writing because Jane Sherwood, a woman in his congregation, asserted that she had seen visions of angels and of God that had given her revelation "concerning that which must come hereafter, purporting indeed that the power of God's Judgment has come & astonishing things soon are to take place."1

In response to the inquiry, Joseph Smith wrote back and related an important truth regarding the way true doctrine is disseminated in the Church. Joseph explained, "As it respects the vision you speak of we do not..."
consider ourselves bound to receive any revelation from any one man or woman without being legally constituted and ordained to that authority and given sufficient proof of it." The Prophet further taught, "I will inform you that it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church or any one to receive instruction for those in authority higher than themselves, therefore you will see the impropriety of giving heed to them." Succinctly, Joseph Smith had laid out essential principles for understanding doctrine in the Lord's restored Church. If a revelation or doctrine was to be given to the Church, it would come from the designated Church authorities, "for the fund[a]mental principals, government and doctrine of the church is invested in the keys of the kingdom." 2

Questions about Church doctrine did not originate, nor did they cease, in 1833 in Benson, Vermont. Many yet wonder and have pressing questions related to Latter-day Saint "doctrine," such as "If God is unchanging and truth is eternal, then why does Church doctrine sometimes change?" or "Why don't we still teach some of the doctrines that were taught in the early Church? Were they wrong, or are we?" When discussing the Latter-day Saint faith, some imply or assume that everything ever spoken by any Church authority past or present constitutes eternally binding Church doctrine. Additionally, upon hearing an idea brought up in the Church, some want to know, "Is that teaching an official doctrine? How can I know?" These questions and many others about Latter-day Saint doctrine have caused difficulty for many, both within and outside the Church.

The purpose of this article is to open a dialogue about the nuances and complexities of Mormon doctrine by proposing two models: the first to evaluate varying types of doctrine and the second to evaluate official sources of doctrine. We begin by defining and understanding the word doctrine. Next we explore various aspects of the word, including concepts such as "eternal doctrine," "supportive doctrine," "policy doctrine," and "esoteric doctrine." We conclude by considering categories that may help us evaluate "official doctrine" and the power in prophetic keys to declare and expand doctrine.

Understanding "Doctrine"

Some of the current confusion surrounding Latter-day Saint doctrine may derive from how it has been variously defined over time, which is primarily a question of semantics. Commonly today, many Latter-day Saints define the word doctrine as those things which are eternal or unchanging gospel truths. 3 However, the term was much more loosely applied by past prophets to also include other types of non-eternal, authoritative teachings.

Dictionaries state that doctrine, in its most basic definition, simply means "something that is taught" or "teaching, instruction." 4 This broader understanding of the term is often the way the word is used in scripture. For example, when Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew records that "the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority" (Matthew 7:28–29; see also Matthew 22:33). The word doctrine in this verse derives from the Greek didachē, meaning "teaching" or "the act of teaching." 5 In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught eternal, timeless truths of the plan of salvation, such as the command to be perfect like God our Father, but he also taught timely cultural applications specific to his hearers, such as the importance of not appearing sad-faced while fasting and responding to lawsuits properly. All of these teachings, whether eternal or dispensation-specific, were part of the Lord's doctrine because they each encompassed part of what he taught (see also Mark 2:27, Mark 11:17–18, Mark 12:38, Luke 4:31).

Historically, Joseph Smith often used the word doctrine more in line with this biblical usage of "something that is taught" or "teaching, instruction." The Prophet and his associates, when printing the Lectures on Faith from the School of the Prophets, classified them as "Theology," and subtitled them "On the Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints." 6 In the preface to the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph articulated that the volume "contains in short, the leading items of the religion which we have professed to believe. The first part of the book will be found to contain a series of Lectures as delivered before a Theological class in this place, and in consequence of their embracing the important doctrine of salvation, we have arranged them into the following work." 7 Thus, the Lectures on Faith defined Church doctrine to such an extent that Church leaders included these lectures in the 1835 printing of Joseph's canonized revelations as the Doctrine and Covenants, rather than the earlier title, the Book of Commandments. Part 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the lectures, was "The Doctrine," and part 2, Joseph's revelations, was "The Covenants." Because the lectures became part of the canonized scripture, they were taught authoritatively as doctrine. These lectures, however, covered a vast array of topics that included not only eternal, unchanging, simple truths of the gospel but also history, rational theology, elaborative ideas, and pedagogical precepts. 8
Since Latter-day Saint prophets continually reveal new teachings and interpret doctrines of the past, what is taught in the Church has changed over time. Currently, the Church teaches many things through its official avenues that are different and novel when compared to what was taught when the Church was founded in April of 1830. For example,

1. We emphasize that “exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom can be attained only by those who have faithfully lived the gospel of Jesus Christ and are sealed as eternal companions.”
2. Youth are taught not to “disfigure [themselves] with tattoos or body piercings.”
3. We declare that God “saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition” into a kingdom of heavenly glory (D&C 76:43).
4. We teach that in the interim between his death and resurrection, Jesus did not go personally to the ungodly and wicked in spirit prison, but that “from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness” (D&C 138:30).
5. Regarding missionary service, “worthy young women who have the desire to serve may be recommended for missionary service beginning at age 19.”
6. Faithful members are not to gather to a central location but to “build up Zion wherever we live.”

God did not reveal all of his doctrines to Joseph Smith, especially as early as 1830. In fact, many of the doctrines revealed to Joseph, like baptisms for the dead, came to him at the end of his ministry. And unlike many other Christian churches, Latter-day Saints do not believe that all doctrines can be found in scripture. Because we believe in living prophets and continuing revelation, our doctrine is not static, and we will constantly receive new authoritative teachings. The ninth article of faith declares, “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” This does not mean that doctrines cannot be eternal or immovable but that some of them have yet to be revealed and that some of the things from the past will be less authoritative—perhaps even no longer taught. Therefore, it is deeply important that we understand those core doctrines that are eternal and recognize those that are timely, descriptive, or no longer taught.

Figure 1 provides a model for discussing this broader concept: making core, eternal doctrines the center, yet allowing for us to evaluate additional types of teachings or authoritative statements by General Authorities. This model follows the Church’s 2007 statement on doctrine, which explains that “some doctrines are more important than others” and that central among these various doctrines are those that “might be considered core doctrines.”

To analyze LDS doctrine, we explore each part of this model and discuss potential implications for our understanding and application. The model encourages the evaluation of each doctrine and requires careful historical and theological thought to understand the meaning of doctrines past, present, and future, rather than basic acceptance of all declarative statements being eternally binding.

**Figure 1. Types of LDS doctrine.**

**Core, Eternal Doctrine**

There are teachings that could be termed “core doctrines” or “eternal doctrines.” In the words of Elder David A. Bednar, these are “gospel doctrines [that] are eternal, do not change, and pertain to the eternal progression and exaltation of Heavenly Father’s sons and daughters.” Elder B. H. Roberts of the Seventy said that “the great framework of the plan of salvation” has “certain truths
that are not affected by ever-changing circumstances; truths which are always the same, no matter how often they may be revealed; truths which are elementary, permanent, fixed; from which there must not be, and cannot be, any departure without condemnation.” Such eternal truths that do not change may include the nature of God, the eternal makeup of the spirit, the universal resurrection, and the work and the glory of God to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of his children (see Moses 1:39). The Church’s founding Articles and Covenants, found in Doctrine and Covenants 20, contain a succinct declaration of core, timeless doctrines, beginning in verse 17 with “there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal,” who “created man, male and female, after his own image” (v. 18) and “gave unto them commandments” (v. 19). However, by departing from his ways, humankind “became fallen” (v. 20). “Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son” (v. 21) so that through belief in the Savior’s divine sacrifice and through the covenant of baptism mankind “should be saved” (v. 25). Those that “worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end” (v. 29) will receive both “justification” (v. 30) and “sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 31). Such truths are at the heart of what has been taught, is taught, and will yet be taught in all dispensations. Such plan-of-salvation truths are what Elder Boyd K. Packer referred to when he said there are “doctrines” which “will remain fixed, eternal.”

As emphasized in Doctrine and Covenants 20, the apex of these timeless, eternal, and unchanging doctrines is what is sometimes referred to as the doctrine of Christ—that Jesus is the Savior of the world and salvation is found through his name alone (see Mosiah 3:17). The Lord said, “This is my doctrine, . . . that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine” (3 Nephi 11:32–35; emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 31:21, 3 Nephi 27:13–21, D&C 33:11–12). The doctrine of Christ and the centrality of his redeeming Atonement will never change, being a fixed and permanent focal point to the plan of God.

Although eternal truths do not vary, what is understood and officially taught can vary as prophets come to comprehend core doctrines more clearly (2 Nephi 28:30). Many modern Latter-day Saints assume that because the gospel of Christ is eternal, God’s prophets have all known the end from the beginning and understand all truths, not only those that have been revealed, but those that will yet be revealed. But Brigham Young taught that Joseph Smith did not know everything about the plan of salvation or his role in the Restoration as he walked out of the Sacred Grove following his experience with God and Jesus. Instead, truths were revealed to him point by point as he learned over many years. Brigham Young explained:

> The Lord can’t reveal to you and I that we can’t understand: . . . for instance when Joseph first received revelation the Lord could not tell him what he was going to do. He didn’t tell him he was going to bring baptism or baptism into the world, or that he was going to gather people upon the earth. I make mention of this to show you that the Lord can’t teach all things to people at once. He gives a little here, a little there, revelation upon revelation, on revelation after revelation, a precept today, tomorrow another, next day another. If the people make good use of it and improve upon what the Lord gives them, then he is ready to bestow more.”

“New” eternal truths revealed to Joseph Smith, such as the universal resurrection and salvation of the human family in degrees of heavenly glory (D&C 76), have always existed, even prior to the Vision in February of 1832. As scholar Robert J. Matthews pointed out, “Through the experience of translating the Bible, Joseph Smith was to come into possession of knowledge he did not previously have.” As the Apostle Paul taught, the Lord’s prophets “know in part, and we prophesy in part” because, although they are seers, they do not see all; “for now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12). As seers continue to see, and new eternal truths are revealed more fully, former perceptions distorted by the lenses of mortality will be clarified, expanded, adapted, and changed as they come to learn and teach “that which is perfect” and then “that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Corinthians 13:10).
Supporting Doctrines

Many doctrines strengthen our belief in and elaborate on the core doctrines. Some are timely answers, and others are authoritative interpretations by prophets. For example, if a core doctrine is that God exists, understanding his corporality will help us better comprehend his nature, and in turn, deepen our faith in him. Additionally, since we were created in God's bodily image, knowing how God obtained his form and image can expand our understanding and faith even further. Christ's Atonement is core and essential, but teachings that discuss how he suffered and what he suffered serve to expand upon the core concept of Atonement and redemption. Supporting doctrines can be eternal truths, but knowledge of them, unlike core doctrines, are not necessarily essential for salvation. In other words, supporting doctrines help us understand and elaborate on the eternal doctrines of salvation. They expand upon our understanding of core doctrines, often providing explanation of “how” such teachings function.

An example of a core, eternal doctrine is that Jesus Christ will return to earth and reign as its rightful king and lawgiver. It has been further revealed as a supporting doctrine that a righteous city of New Jerusalem will be built and Christ’s people will gather to prepare for his return. Other supporting doctrines related to the Second Coming are that there will be a great gathering in Adam-ondi-Ahman to prepare for Christ’s millennial rule, that when Jesus returns to the earth the Mount of Olives will split, that the Jewish people will recognize the Lord as the Messiah (see D&C 45:51–53), that Satan will be bound, and that there will be a thousand-year period of peace. These teachings may not be essential for salvation, but they elaborate upon, expand our understanding about, increase our faith in, and provide potential “hows” to the core doctrine of Christ’s return to earth. This supporting ring of doctrine has the potential to include many doctrines of the Church. Although knowledge of supporting doctrines may not be essential for salvation, the truths in them have an eternal element that make them distinct from doctrines that may be termed as policy or procedure.

Policy Doctrine

Church policy is always authoritative, but it inevitably changes as the Church forms new policies that adjust, expand, and react to the situations of the membership. Policy doctrines are formed as the Church addresses issues in each generation to help bring to pass the eternal life of mankind. These are “the organization, programs, and procedures [that] will be altered as directed by Him whose church this is.”21 Or as President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught, “Procedures, programs, policies, and patterns of organization are helpful for our spiritual progress here on earth, but let’s not forget that they are subject to change. In contrast, the core of the gospel—the doctrine and the principles—will never change.”22

Policy doctrines are based on eternal, essential truths and supporting doctrines. They can include such teachings as ordaining worthy young men to the priesthood at age twelve, standards for dress and grooming, placing baptismal fonts under the ground, not drinking wine, and changes in Church structure, such as the role of the Seventies or who attends Church council meetings. Surely such teachings as these have not existed in all dispensations and are therefore subject to change based on inspiration and revelation by those who hold the keys to establish laws for the Church. Joseph Smith wrote, “Whatsoever those men [priesthood leaders] did in authority, in the name of the Lord, and did it truly and faithfully, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a law on earth in heaven” (D&C 128:9).

Policy doctrine exists because God reveals different behavioral applications and policies to his children based on their temporal circumstances. The Word of Wisdom is a modern example of policy doctrine. Restrictions on tea and coffee and wine have not been in effect in all dispensations, yet because the Lord foresaw “evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days” (D&C 89:4), he provided a new doctrine for the “benefit” (D&C 89:1) of the Saints. This doctrine, in particular, has taken many shifts in policy, and eventually by 1933 the Church handbook of instruction required members to strictly follow the Word of Wisdom to be able to enter into the temple. Similarly, the doctrinal teachings restricting multiple earrings were not authoritatively taught prior to President Gordon B. Hinckley’s prophetic counsel.

Policy doctrines are likely to change and be given different emphases depending upon the needs and direction of Church leadership during the time—with each era being commanded and inspired in order to guide the Church to accomplish its mission in varied circumstances over time.

Esoteric Doctrine

The word esoteric implies teachings that are only understood by a small group of people. Its synonyms are words such as obscure and ambiguous. Not all
doctrines have been revealed, and there are also doctrines no longer taught that may be true but are not necessary for our understanding now. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that “it is not always wise to relate all the truth. Even Jesus, the Son of God, had to refrain from doing so, and had to restrain His feelings many times for the safety of Himself and His followers, and had to conceal the righteous purposes of His heart in relation to many things pertaining to His Father’s kingdom.” As M. Gerald Bradford and Larry E. Dahl succinctly stated about “doctrine” in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, “Many individuals write or preach their views. Some, by study and obedience, may learn truths that go beyond the stated position of the Church, but this does not authorize them to speak officially for the Church or to present their views as binding on the Church. There are many subjects about which the scriptures are not clear and about which the Church has made no official pronouncements. In such matters, one can find differences of opinion among Church members and leaders. Until the truth of these matters is made known by revelation, there is room for different levels of understanding and interpretation of unsettled issues.” The Prophet Joseph lamented, “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have, of the glories of the Kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive it.”

In April 1829, the Lord revealed through Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery that “other records have I, that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate” (D&C 9:2). During that same period, Joseph protected the gold plates, which included a large sealed portion translated by Moroni that God would reveal to them later. The book of Ether declared, “Touch them not in order that ye may translate; for that thing is forbidden Mormonism. Church, but this does not authorize them to speak officially for the Church or to present their views as binding on the Church. There are many subjects about which the scriptures are not clear and about which the Church has made no official pronouncements. In such matters, one can find differences of opinion among Church members and leaders. Until the truth of these matters is made known by revelation, there is room for different levels of understanding and interpretation of unsettled issues.” The Prophet Joseph lamented, “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have, of the glories of the Kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive it.”

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further elaborated over successive years. Initially, baptisms for the dead were performed in rivers without proper record keeping, with very little instruction about proper procedures. Joseph Smith later revealed a policy that there would come a time when baptisms for the dead would have to be performed in sacred temples where witnesses and recorders were present (D&C 124:127).

- Baptism is a core doctrine of salvation.
- Baptism for the dead is a supportive, essential doctrine revealed to explain the process by which every soul will have the opportunity to be baptized.
- How and where proxy baptisms can legitimately be performed has been established by the policy of the Church.
- Precisely how these proxy baptisms will be accepted by the deceased in the spirit world has not been fully revealed and may be considered an esoteric doctrine.

Helpful Tools to Evaluate Doctrine

Because we have a lay membership that is required to teach each other the doctrines of the kingdom (D&C 88:77), members will, inevitably, need to evaluate the Church’s authorized teachings. How can we know if the Church stands behind a particular teaching as one of its authorized doctrines? Although a variety of things are taught in the Church (and thus may be considered part of Latter-day Saint doctrine), the following four questions are designed to help point us in the right direction when we are looking for official teachings.

1. Is it repeatedly found in the scriptures?
2. Is it proclaimed by the united voice of the current Brethren?
3. Is it consistently taught by current General Authorities and general officers acting in their official capacity?
4. Is it found in recent Church publications or statements?

Let’s briefly analyze each of these four potential sources of official Latter-day Saint Church doctrine.

The harmonized scriptures. The officially accepted Latter-day Saint scriptures (the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price) are primary sources that members should address when identifying doctrine. Indeed, these books are often colloquially called the “standard” works, implying “accepted,” or a benchmark criterion for doctrine. Elder B. H. Roberts of the Seventy taught, “The Church has confined the sources of doctrine by which it is willing to be bound before the world to the things that God has revealed, and which the Church has officially accepted, and those alone. . . . These have been repeatedly accepted and endorsed by the Church in general conference assembled, and are the only sources of absolute appeal for our doctrine.” Professor Robert L. Millet wrote, “In determining whether something is a part of the doctrine of the Church, we might ask, ‘Is it found within the four standard works?’” Elder D. Todd Christofferson said, “The scriptures are the touchstone for measuring correctness and truth.”

It should be noted, however, that simply because something is found within the pages of canonized scripture does not mean that it represents the Church’s official doctrine (see Articles of Faith 1:8). When using scripture to define official doctrines, we are also to seek truths that are often repeated and internally self-consistent. Although it is found in the New Testament, for example, we would not proclaim as our doctrine that “no man hath seen God at any time” (1 John 4:12), because this singular verse sets outside many other harmonized examples of those who have seen God face-to-face (see Exodus 24:9–10, 33:11; Genesis 32:30; Acts 7:55–56, Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17). Elder Russell M. Nelson taught, “In the Bible we read this important declaration: ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word
be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1). This assures God’s children that divine doctrines are confirmed by more than one scriptural witness. . . . Scriptural witnesses authenticate each other.30 Similarly, Elder Boyd K. Packer taught that “essential truths are repeated over and over again [in the scriptures]. . . . Every verse, whether oft-quoted or obscure, must be measured against other verses. There are complementary and tempering teachings in the scriptures which bring a balanced knowledge of truth.”32

Additionally, some doctrines in scripture, like the required ordinance of circumcision for males or the performances of the law of Moses, or policy doctrines such as requiring missionaries to leave without purse (money) or scrip (food) (see Matthew 10:9–10; D&C 24:18), have been superseded by later revelation or prophetic direction (see Galatians 6:15; 3 Nephi 9:17; 3 Nephi 15:8). Thus we should look to see if a scriptural teaching is confirmed by modern revelation or supplanted by it.

The united voice of the current Brethren. Because the words of the Lord never cease, we look to the Brethren to declare his current voice and will to his church and people. We do not believe in sola scriptura (by scripture alone), but in sola prophēta (by prophet alone).33 One of the roles of the prophet, as President Gordon B. Hinckley said when he was President of the Church, is to “declare doctrine.”34 Those who also hold all the keys of the kingdom, namely the First Presidency (D&C 81:2), “receive the oracles for the whole church” (D&C 124:126). Sustained by the key-holding Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (D&C 112:30), “with divine inspiration” these two highest governing bodies of the Church “counsel together to establish doctrine.”35

In a recent Ensign article titled “How Is Doctrine Established?,” LaRene Porter Gaunt of Church magazines wrote, “When revelation is doctrine for the whole Church, it comes to only the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. . . . The prophet and President of the Church can receive revelation individually that becomes doctrine when it is sustained by the united voice of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.”36 This is consistent with the scriptural injunction to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy in Doctrine and Covenants 107:27 that “every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other” (D&C 107:27).

President Gordon B. Hinckley expounded on the point of prophetic unanimity, relating that “any major questions of policy, procedures, programs, or doctrine are considered deliberately and prayerfully by the First Presidency and the Twelve together. . . . No decision emanates from the deliberations of the First Presidency and the Twelve without total unanimity among all concerned.”37 Recently, Elder M. Russell Ballard taught, “When the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve speak with a united voice, it is the voice of the Lord for that time.”38 Although “the objective is not simply consensus among council members but revelation from God,”39 as Elder Christofferson reminded, prophetic unanimity cannot be lightly overlooked, as without it there is not the “same power or validity” (D&C 107:27) in united doctrinal pronouncements.

Examples of doctrine proclaimed by the united voice of the current First Presidency and Twelve Apostles can include statements such as letters from the First Presidency, official declarations and proclamations, and official handbooks of instruction. There are other books, manuals, publications, or documents released under the approval or sanction of the united voice of the current prophets, such as Preach My Gospel.40 Additionally, there are official announcements made or released under the united voice of the prophets. For example, in the press conference after announcing the change of the mission ages for males and females in October 2012, Elder Russell M. Nelson said of the age change, “This has been the subject of much study and prayer. We as a First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve are united in our decision to make these important adjustments.”41

Repeated teachings from the current General Authorities and officers. An additional method to evaluate whether something may be considered part of official Latter-day Saint doctrine is to determine if something is being taught collectively by the current general Church authorities and officers acting in their official capacity. For example, currently many Church leaders are making a pronounced effort to increase devotion to the Sabbath day and meaning to the ordinance of the sacrament, with Church leaders sending training videos and other materials to Church leaders for dissemination in their wards and branches. In another example, a supportive doctrine of Christ’s Atonement—his “enabling power” or “strengthening power”—has been oft-repeated in official Church settings by Church officers acting in their capacity.42 However, the phrase “enabling power” is not found in the standard works, nor is it found in any known official, united statement by the First
Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.\textsuperscript{45} Undoubtedly, however, Jesus Christ’s enabling power is an official, supportive doctrine of the Church because it is oft-repeated and taught collectively by numerous Church officers acting in their official capacity. Venues of delivering authorized Church doctrine by Church officers include general conference addresses, worldwide leadership trainings and broadcasts, regional conferences, and trainings and seminars for ecclesiastical leaders.

There is safety in the cumulative teachings of general Church officers. Though many doctrines are emphasized, those that have staying power and find their way into the talks and statements delivered to the membership of the Church by numerous authorities can be trusted more than individual statements. As the LDS Newsroom article “Approaching Mormon Doctrine” reminds, “A single statement made by a single leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, but is not meant to be officially binding [doctrine] for the whole Church.”\textsuperscript{44} As Elder Neil L. Andersen said, “The doctrine of the Church . . . is not hidden in an obscure paragraph of one talk. True principles are taught frequently and by many. Our doctrine is not difficult to find.”\textsuperscript{45}

Current/recent publications of the Church. While not carrying the weight of harmonized scripture or the united voice of the Brethren, official doctrine for the Church is also taught via the Church’s authorized publications. The LDS Newsroom statement reminds us that “[Church doctrine] is consistently proclaimed in official Church publications.” While much of the content contained within official church publications is written by curriculum personnel, scholars, and lay members alike, “All of the [Church publications] . . . are reviewed and cleared . . . before they are published and issued to the Church,” said Elder Dean L. Larsen of the First Quorum of Seventy while acting as the managing director of Curriculum Resources. He also stated, “Official publications of the Church carry messages that are sound in doctrine and fully in harmony with currently approved policies and procedures.”\textsuperscript{46}

Examples of official Church publications that publish authorized doctrine include current Church magazines such as the Ensign or New Era; seminary and institute manuals; priesthood and relief society manuals; items published by © Intellectual Reserve/Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, such as the Addiction Recovery Program; scholarly publications such as The Joseph Smith Papers from the Church Historian’s Press; and web content on official Church spaces such as mormon.org, lds.org, and LDS Newsroom. While these publications are not the ultimate source for appeal of eternal, supportive, policy, or esoteric doctrine, they can be considered trustworthy sources that represent teachings of authorized Church doctrine.

### Evaluating Official LDS Teachings

These four factors merely serve to assist in evaluating the extent to which an LDS teaching may be considered authoritative or "official." *Is the teaching found in . . .

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<td>What is being taught collectively, cohesively, and consistently by general Church leaders acting in official capacities such as · General conference addresses · Worldwide broadcasts/trainings · Regional conference talks · Seminars and trainings</td>
<td>Official united pronouncements, proclamations, and publications from the current Prophets, Seers, and Revelers such as · Official Declarations and Proclamations · Letters from the First Presidency · Official Handbooks of Instruction · Books, documents, announcements under the official signature of the First Presidency or Twelve Apostles</td>
<td>Teachings that are found repeatedly and consistently in the *canonized revelations and scriptural writings of the prophets in · The Holy Bible · The Book of Mormon · The Doctrine and Covenants · The Pearl of Great Price</td>
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* Formally accepted by the Church and its members as standard works

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Figure 3. Official Sources of LDS doctrine.

### Applying the Models

It is our hope that understanding types and also official sources of LDS doctrine in the two models we have proposed can help learners better evaluate and understand various Latter-day Saint teachings. As an example of how
these models may inform various LDS teachings, we will briefly analyze three family-centered doctrinal subjects.

**Family Home Evening**

As a simple and fairly noncontroversial example, what type of doctrine is family home evening? It doesn't seem that family home evening is a core, eternal truth necessary to know or believe for salvation, nor an elaborative teaching to help us better understand core truths. Family home evening likely fits most as an example of a policy doctrine—a timely teaching for the Latter-day Saints helping us to better apply core, eternal truths related to the family. Using the second of the proposed models herein, if one were to ask “Is family home evening an official teaching of the Church today?” the answer would be, “Yes, it is.” Although the family home evening program may not be specifically taught in the scriptures, the concept of righteous parents gathering their children to teach gospel truths is found consistently in the standard works (see 1 Nephi 1:1; Enos 1:1; Mosiah 1:2, Mosiah 4:15; D&C 68:25–30; D&C 93:40–48). Specifically, the directive to hold family home evening on Monday is found in the current official Handbook of Instructions in section 1.4.2.47 The counsel to hold family home evenings has also been declared repeatedly in recent general conference addresses and is found published in multiple official current Church publications, such as the Family Home Evening Resource Book, the Family Guidebook, or the family home evening page on lds.org. In summary, family home evening could be categorized as an official policy doctrine of the Church.

**Jesus’s Marriage Status**

How might the two models proposed herein help us understand a more controversial doctrine, such as whether Jesus was married in mortality and to whom? This question arises not only out of curiosity and doctrinal assumption (some deduce that if eternal marriage is required for exaltation, and surely the Lord is exalted, therefore he must be married) but also due to the teachings of some early Latter-day Saint Apostles. Elder Orson Hyde taught in the October 1854 general conference that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that the wedding at Cana of Galilee was Jesus’s own, to which President Brigham Young arose and gave an “amen” to Elder Hyde’s comments. Apostle Orson Pratt also wrote in The Seer that the Savior was married, suggesting perhaps that he had more wives than one. There is also evidence in 1883 of Joseph F. Smith teaching that Jesus was married.

Using our proposed models to evaluate doctrine, Jesus being married could be argued as a doctrine of the Church in the mid- to latter-nineteenth century based on the cumulative teachings of Church General Authorities. However, there is no known revelation on the subject, nor united statement from the First Presidency and the Twelve, and the cumulative standard works seem to evade the issue. Like other early doctrines, Jesus’s marriage status faded from public teaching over the next decades and moved into the realm of the unknown or undeclared. In 1912 President Charles W. Penrose, as a member of the First Presidency, broached the subject in the Improvement Era and said: “We do not know anything about Jesus Christ being married. The Church has no authoritative declaration on the subject.” Decades later, a 1997 Ensign article suggested that answering the question, “Was Jesus married?” was “inappropriate to discuss in a classroom setting.” In 2006, due primarily to the popularity of the novel The Da Vinci Code, which posited that Jesus was married and had children, the Church officially released a statement through its spokesperson, saying, “The belief that Christ was married has never been official Church doctrine. It is neither sanctioned nor taught by the church.” Thus, while once perhaps being an authoritative teaching, using the model of official sources of doctrine, it is no longer an authorized teaching of the Church. It is absent in the Church’s current official publications, it is not taught cumulatively by the modern General Authorities, nor is it declared by the united voice of the modern First Presidency and Apostles. Using our model of types of doctrine, Jesus’s marriage status now rightly belongs to the esoteric ring of doctrine—something once known or taught by others and one day may be taught again, but is not known, taught openly, or declared authoritatively today. It is now a nonauthorized, esoteric teaching.

**Heavenly Mother**

Many wonder about teachings on our Mother in Heaven. What does the Church teach officially about her? Are teachings about her also esoteric or unauthorized, like Jesus’s marriage status? Our models herein would say no. Recently, the Church released an official essay on lds.org addressing the Church’s fundamental doctrines related to Heavenly Mother.77 Teachings confirming her divine existence are found also in our current published hymnal. Many recent Church authorities have also spoke of Heavenly Mother in...
Each [person] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Specifically the First Presidency in 1909 unitedly declared, “all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.”

While the harmonized scriptural record does not specifically address Mother in Heaven, teachings about our divine Mother are openly and authoritatively declared by the united voice of the modern prophets, their cumulative teachings, and in official Church publications, thus supporting its status as an official doctrine of the Church.

Applying the first model, what type of doctrine may our belief in Heavenly Mother be? The Church’s official essay on lds.org says, “The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is a cherished and distinctive belief among Latter-day Saints.” While not using the word “core” or “essential,” clearly the doctrine that exaltation is predicated upon the eternal sealing of a man and woman is central to our theology (see D&C 131:1–4; D&C 132:19–22). Teachings about Heavenly Mother may be considered as supportive doctrine to this core teaching related to eternal marriage and godhood. Considering who our deified Mother may be, or how she attained her exalted station, or what her specific influence or mission may be in our quest for salvation seems to fall into the realm of esoteric doctrine. Clearly she loves us, and we await further revealed knowledge on the subject, to be received with gladness. Until then, as the official essay on the subject emphasizes, “our present knowledge about a Mother in Heaven is limited.”

These are but a few examples of how the models proposed herein may help to better understand Latter-day saint doctrinal teachings. We make no claim that our conclusions on these previous examples are definitive or even correct. We merely offer them as examples of how our models proposed herein may help facilitate understanding, evaluation, and a starting point for discussion on various doctrinal subjects, whether the subject is fairly benign like Jesus’s birth date and whether priesthood holders should wear white shirts when officiating in ordinances, or more sensitive and controversial teachings past and present, such as priesthood restrictions, plural marriage, or same-gender marriage.

Conclusion: Expanding Doctrine

In Mormonism, the current prophets identify the authentic and authoritative doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Though scripture, personal experience, tradition, and our own reason are constantly part of our evaluation of doctrine, prophetic declaration reigns supreme. The concept of continuing revelation, expressed in the ninth article of faith, has allowed for prophets to address each generation and the Church to build “line upon line, precept upon precept” with a certain kind of flexibility that is limited when doctrine can only be found within the pages of the Bible, or to being only that which is eternal and unchanging. All of this implies that new ideas, altered concepts, expanded teachings, and additional knowledge will be given, thus requiring what we teach—our “doctrine”—to also be expandable. The very notions of a living Church and continuing revelation suggest that any statement on doctrine is not a declaration of eternal finality but temporary understanding or expediency.

When doctrine becomes too fixed, it loses its inert potential for revelation. The Prophet Joseph Smith opposed the idea of too strict a definition of the tenants of the Latter-day Saint faith, even after he published his own “Articles of Faith” in a letter to John Wentworth in March of 1842. As Joseph told a Mr. Butterfield who interviewed him in 1843, “The most prominent point of difference in sentiment between the Latter Day Saints [sic] and Sectarians was, that the latter were all circumscribed by some peculiar creed, which deprived its members the privilege of believing any thing not contained therein: Whereas the Latter Day Saints [sic] have no creed, but are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time.”

We are not ignorant to the contradictions of our own positions within this paper—that we are encouraging a more flexible and expansive understanding of Latter-day Saint doctrine, all the while drawing circles and lines to confine it. Defining Church doctrine is much like trying to identify humility: the moment you proclaim it, you have lost its very essence. Thus, although we have proposed delineations of Latter-day Saint doctrine, our models proposed herein—like the nature of doctrine itself—are meant to be flexible and aid in coming to a clearer understanding of truth. To do anything contrary is opposed to the very concept of revelation and living oracles. We anticipate that readers of this article may question whether something is an eternal doctrine or a supportive doctrine, or whether something is considered policy or
esoteric doctrine. We expect that persons will come to differing conclusions not only about which category of doctrine a certain teaching may be placed, but that they may even disagree with the categorical definitions and delineations we have proposed in this paper. We hope this is the case and that these models will act as a springboard for not only helping to answer questions or concerns related to Latter-day Saint doctrine but also further discussion and debate about how doctrine is explained.

Although understanding Latter-day Saint doctrine requires believers to turn to the prophets, it also requires personal evaluation and rigorous study. The declarative nature of doctrine may seem rigid, but its flexibility is also paramount. To be too rigid in defining doctrine goes against the very concept Joseph Smith articulated about creeds: it closes us to new and expansive ways of seeing, understanding, believing, and teaching. Latter-day Saint doctrine is that which we teach—eternal, supportive, policy, esoteric, among others—guided and revealed and officially proclaimed by authorized, key-holding prophets, seers, and revelators. That which tries to confine the Lord and his servants from receiving and teaching anything that is not eternally and unchangingly necessary and simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (“Teach Them to Understand,” Ricks College Campus Education Week devotional, 4 June 1998, 4.

Notes
1. John Sims Carter, journal, 10 March and 5 April 1833, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
3. The current Seminaries and Institutes of Religion’s Gospel Teaching and Learning manual uses the following definition of doctrine: “A doctrine is a fundamental, unchanging truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Church Educational System, Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 16.
6. Strong’s Concordance G1221 rendering “doctrine” as didachē, meaning “1. Teaching” and “2. The act of teaching.”
9. The authoritative power of these lectures goes from one prophet simply teaching something to a declaration voted upon by the Church and published as scripture. These profound lectures on “doctrine” cover a vast array of topics, from eternal truths such as the creation of the world and the Fall of man in Lecture First; to historical dates, ages, and lists of righteous men in Lecture Second; to elaborative and supportive theology such as the three necessary components to have true faith in God in Lecture Third; to esoteric and arcane concepts in Lecture Fifth such as “there are two personages” that make up the Godhead: “The Father being a personage of spirit . . . the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle.” Lectures on Faith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 512. All of these ideas, some of which may not be eternal and unchanging, were part of “something that is taught” or “teaching, instruction” and thus represented part of the doctrine of the Latter-day Saints at that time.
11. “Dress and Appearance,” in For the Strength of Youth (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 7.
13. “Zion,” in True to the Faith (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 189.
On another occasion, before he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, then BYU—Idaho President David A. Bednar taught, “Doctrine refers to the eternal, unchanging, and simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” “Teach Them to Understand,” Ricks College Campus Education Week devotional, 4 June 1998, 4.
18. The prophet Mormon provides an interesting example of how new and additional doctrinal understanding comes to the Lord’s prophets. As Mormon edited 1 Nephi chapter 28, he discussed the three Nephite disciples who were translated. Mormon mentioned that he did not know if the three Nephites “were mortal or immortal” (1 Nephi 28:17) after they were translated. Later, in the same chapter, Mormon says in verse 37 that after he had recorded his uncertainty of the three Nephites’ mortality or immortality, Mormon had asked God about it and the Lord “made it manifest unto me that there must needs be a change wrought upon their bodies” (v. 37) but that the change “was not equal to that which shall take place at the last day” as immortal beings in the resurrection (v. 39). Mormon’s knowledge on the doctrinal matter of translated and resurrected beings was expanded and improved upon in front of the reader’s very eyes within a single chapter of scripture.
26. Joseph Smith to the Council of the Twelve, 13 December 1840, Letterbook 2, CHL. See Doctrine and Covenants 114, 127, and 128 for further elaborations of this doctrine.
27. These four categories are similar to those that Robert L. Millet identified: “In determining whether something is a part of the doctrine of the Church, we might ask, Is it found within the four standard works? Within official declarations or proclamations? Is it discussed in general conference or other official gatherings by general Church leaders today? Is it found in the general handbooks or approved curriculum of the Church today? If it meets at least one of these criteria, we can feel secure and appropriate about teaching it.” Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?”, 19.


33. See the forthcoming work of Michael Hubbard MacKay, Sola Prophēta: The Radical Origins of Mormon Priesthood in the Burned-Over District.


35. LDS Newsroom, “Approaching Mormon Doctrine.”


40. Elder M. Russell Ballard said of Preach My Gospel, “Under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Preach My Gospel has been produced. . . . Every word has been studied by the full First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve; this has their complete and total blessing and endorsement.” In Preach My Gospel: Introduction for Leaders, Missionary Training Satellite Broadcast, 15 October 2004. DVD. See also Benjamin White, “The History of Preach My Priesthood in the Burned-Over District.”


43. Perhaps the nearest approximation to this is in the scriptural study guidebook True to the Faith, which has the First Presidency’s endorsement (see “Grae”).


47. “Latter-day prophets have counseled parents to hold a weekly family home evening to teach their children the gospel, bear testimony of its truthfulness, and strengthen family unity” (Handbook 2: Administering the Church, Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2010, 5).

There is no need to defend past statements on race because this generation of leaders condemns all racism, past and present. That includes racism within the Church.

方式：保罗，告诉我一点关于你的背景，关于种族和摩门教。什么促使你进行这个讨论？

瑞夫：我从2007年开始研究这本书《宗教的不同颜色：种族和摩门教的白人斗争》（纽约：牛津大学出版社，2015）。我熟悉一些已有的白人研究历史。白人研究历史主要围绕移民和劳动历史。有关爱尔兰移民的研究表明，他们被种族化为不白或不够白。历史上的爱尔兰移民试图通过移民和劳动历史来证明自己的白人身份。同样，其他移民群体也试图在进入美国后逐渐美国化或被同化。我熟悉一些爱尔兰移民的研究，他们被种族化为不白或不够白。历史上的爱尔兰移民试图通过移民和劳动历史来证明自己的白人身份。同样，其他移民群体也试图在进入美国后逐渐美国化或被同化。我想做些研究来证实这一点是真实的。

方式：你提到两个主要由天主教徒组成的群体，是否有任何关于宗教和种族的讨论？

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方式：你指出两个主要由天主教徒组成的群体，是否有任何关于宗教和种族的讨论？
Reeve: There is. One of the things that really interested me is that the existing historiography didn’t really pay attention to religion; it was mostly an immigrant and a labor historiography. The existing historiography does not pay significant attention to the Catholic religion of the Italian and Irish immigrants, a gap that I believed needed to be addressed. In my research, I had come across incidences where people from outside of Mormonism—Protestant Americans in particular—looked in at Mormons and suggested that they weren’t merely religiously different; they were sometimes physically different, even racially different. I started paying attention to that. I made a file, and started collecting sources, and decided that I could situate the Mormon experience within this bigger whiteness historiography and made the case that whiteness historians had largely ignored the religious component to this racialization that took place in the nineteenth century.

There are a couple of studies of Jewish immigrants which do pay attention to religion, and one of them, I think, is really quite nicely done—The Price of Whiteness is a Jewish whiteness study. For me, the interesting thing was that with the Mormons you have an inside religious group, a religion born in America, yet Mormons were being racialized as not American, not fully white, somehow a distinct “other,” not just religiously different but racially different.

So, I started the research. I had colleagues at the University of Utah who said I might get a nice journal article out of my research, but there certainly is not a book there. I started the research, and it just sort of snowballed. Friends and colleagues became aware of the project, and I would regularly get emails containing sources that fellow historians had come across. Once people became aware, they started paying attention to it. It seems to permeate interactions with Mormons in the nineteenth century.

Wayment: You’ve also looked at whiteness in Mormon scripture, is that right?

Reeve: Yes, I mean the Book of Mormon obviously has passages that are charged with race and can certainly be read in very racist ways, and Mormons have read them in those kinds of ways. I think, perhaps, Mormons sometimes struggle to know exactly what is going on there. The narrative of the Book of Mormon especially revolves around a notion of the fallen Lamanites being redeemed into white and delightsome people, and obviously nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint leaders latched onto that and believed that their mission was to help redeem Native Americans, whom they understood as racially different from Euro-American Latter-day Saints. It was a mission for Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century to redeem Native Americans from their fallen status and make them “white and delightsome.”

Wayment: So, an interesting thing you said—and I hadn’t planned to ask this—Mormons, at the time that they were developing this narrative of redeeming Native Americans, were also viewed as ethnically not white enough, or racially not white enough. Is that accurate?

Reeve: That is accurate. That’s really the point of the book: that Mormons were seen as not white enough; outsiders were never quite sure how to categorize Mormons. Nearly every marginalized group in nineteenth-century America was used as a comparison with the Mormons. There was a narrative of guilt by association: Mormons were missionaries amongst Native Americans, so outsiders concluded that Mormons were conspiring with Native Americans to wipe out true, white Americans.

Wayment: Like the events that took place in Missouri, or later in the Nauvoo period?

Reeve: Yes, both. Every time the Mormons were driven from their homes—so I’m talking about the expulsions from Jackson County and from Clay County, from the state of Missouri altogether, the state of Illinois altogether, or even the Utah war—there was a corresponding accusation of Mormon-Indian conspiracy. It happened every time. It was one of the rationalizations used to justify a Mormon expulsion. It was in the letters piling up on Governor Boggs’s desk before he issued the extermination order. The accusations took three key forms: Outsiders suggested that Mormons were conspiring with Indians to wipe out white Americans. They were intermarrying amongst them, and sometimes the argument was that the Mormons had become more savage than the “savages.” Outsiders also said things like, “White people really shouldn’t act this way”; “Mormons are not performing whiteness”; “they’re not true Anglo-Saxons”; “they’re more like Indians than they are like true, white Americans.”
Wayment: So, in a sense, there was this “othering” pressure, and Mormons now were other and Native Americans were other, so was it easy to say that they were both such different categories; they were conspiring against the United States. Is that an OK way to say it?

Reeve: Yes, I think that’s right. I think that this racialization process was the way in which outsiders justified discriminatory policies against the Mormons. How did you justify an extermination order against a group of people who looked like you? One way in which you did so was to suggest that in fact they weren’t like you, they were more like marginalized groups that nineteenth-century Americans felt perfectly justifiable in exterminating or expelling—Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, immigrants. Mormons were conflated with all of those different groups and it is one way in which the nation justified discriminatory policies against them.

Wayment: So, isn’t it true that the Book of Mormon works in a different direction? It’s kind of recognizing an “other,” a different race, and trying to redeem that? Whereas the American experience, what you were saying, is trying to identify an “other” so that we can push it to the periphery, maybe exclude it. Is that correct?

Reeve: I think that is correct. Mormons in the nineteenth century read the Book of Mormon narrative and saw in themselves the need to become agents of redemption for Native Americans. From a twenty-first-century perspective, this was paternalistic and animated by colonialism, but nonetheless, the notion is that Mormons saw themselves as agents of uplift. They used racialized language in the way in which that uplift played out, but they saw their mission as helping to redeem the fallen decedents of ancient Israel. And Mormonism was born into a racial context in which President Andrew Jackson had signed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the same year Mormonism was founded. Andrew Jackson had become convinced that Native Americans were not merely culturally different, but racially different, and in fact intermixing with white Americans had been a disaster. So the best thing to do was to remove them from their homes east of the Mississippi to an Indian country west of the Mississippi River. Mormons came along and suggested that they had a book that was reportedly a history of this group of people, and that Indians were in fact fallen descendants of ancient Israel and that they had a divine role in the ushering in of Christ’s return. The Mormon view of who Indians were shines in the face of the way in which Protestant, white America viewed Native Americans at the same time.

Wayment: So, it was almost countercultural, maybe even subversive to the American agenda at that time?

Reeve: Yes, that is one accusation absolutely leveled against Mormons. One of the themes that I trace is the way in which Protestant, white America made these arguments, these accusations against the Mormons. I also then look at the ways in which outsiders looked to the Native American context as a solution to the Mormon problem. So the Indian solution would be the solution to the Mormon problem; there was actually a reservation proposed for Mormons.

Wayment: I didn’t know that. Where was that located?

Reeve: After Joseph Smith’s murder in Illinois, there was a low-level official in Illinois who actually made a formal proposal that a Mormon reserve be created. He was explicit in saying that it was borrowed from this Native American, Indian reservation context. His proposal was to give the Mormons twenty-four square miles of land where only Mormons could settle, and there would be an agent appointed to preside. He borrowed from the reservation process in terms of the administrative structure. He proposed this to Mormons in Illinois, who responded by saying, “Well, it’s worth exploring,” because they really were looking for a new place to go by that point. Mormons were not necessarily opposed to the plan and even argued that twenty-four square miles was not enough land. The proposal did not receive much traction and died without coming to fruition.

Wayment: Let me shift gears a little bit. You’re familiar with the Gospel Topics essays, and the Church has now reflected on this period and made some statements regarding how we handled race, how we currently view race, and in a big picture I wonder if you would comment on what you feel the essay is saying, and maybe what it’s not saying. Help us read that from an historian’s perspective.

Reeve: Sure. Well, I think the “Race and the Priesthood” essay attempts to situate Mormonism’s priesthood and temple restrictions within a broader American racial context. Mormonism was born into a very charged racial atmosphere. We just talked about the racial atmosphere towards Native Americans; there was also a very charged atmosphere towards African Americans, and Mormonism was born into that context and can’t escape its consequences. So, what I see for the “Race and the Priesthood” essay is an effort to try to help Latter-day Saints understand that context. In the first couple of decades of Mormonism, there was an open racial attitude in terms of priesthood and temple admission. There were notions of universal
salvation, a universal gospel message, and a universal male priesthood. Two well-documented black Latter-day Saints were ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood in the first couple of decades of Mormonism. Then, what you see taking place across the course of the nineteenth century was a shrinking space for black Latter-day Saints within their chosen faith.

One of the most significant ways in which people claimed whiteness for themselves in the nineteenth century was in distance from blackness. Even Native American tribes passed laws against their tribal members marrying black people. The majority of states in the nation had laws against black–white racial mixing. I think that it is helpful to view race as a hierarchy, with Anglo-Saxons at the top and a variety of less desirable “races” beneath them. People were clamoring for a higher position on this racial ladder. Mormons were one of many groups that were racialized and pushed down that ladder at the same time they were trying to climb up and secure a more favorable rung for themselves.

Wayment: So do you see that happening as early as Brigham Young, prior to Brigham Young, or would you say mostly during the Utah period? Were they trying to grasp onto this American concept of whiteness?

Reeve: It happens even in the first couple of decades of Mormonism. So, the first documented black person to join the Church was in 1830 in Kirtland, the founding year of Mormonism. A man by the name of Black Pete joined Mormonism in Kirtland, part of a group that was converted by those early missionaries, and within a few months, I found a news report in Philadelphia and in New York stating that Mormons had a black man worshipping with them. This was not a celebration of Mormon diversity. Then, in Missouri, the accusation was that “Mormons are inviting free blacks to the state of Missouri to incite a slave rebellion and to steal our white wives and daughters.” Fear of race mixing was bound up in Mormonism, almost from the beginning, and that was a factor in the Mormon expulsion from Jackson County. So those accusations of a Mormon-Indian conspiracy are there, but also accusations that Mormons allowed and even promoted black-white race mixing. “Mormons accepted rogues, and vagabonds, and free blacks,” is one charge leveled against them in the state of Missouri. Mormons were accused of being too accepting of people that proper white American society knew should be excluded.

But in terms of the priesthood restriction, the first documented open articulation of a race-based priesthood restriction from a prophet was President Brigham Young in 1852 to the Utah territorial legislature. We know that a couple of black Latter-day Saints were ordained to the priesthood, and we know that Joseph Smith was aware of and sanctioned at least one of those ordinations, and his younger brother who was an Apostle at the time, William Smith, ordained the other well-documented black person to the priesthood.

Wayment: And the other being Elijah Abel?

Reeve: So Elijah Abel was one, and Q. Walker Lewis was the other. Joseph Smith signed Abel’s certificate in March of 1836. Abel was ordained on 3 March and Joseph Smith signed a ministerial certificate later that month, which certified that he was an ordained elder. It was a certificate that he was an ordained minister of the Mormon gospel, authorized to preach.

Wayment: Then he could be a missionary.

Reeve: Exactly. It indicates that he was ordained to the Mormon priesthood, an elder on 3 March 1836. Then on 20 December, that same year, he was ordained into the Third Quorum of the Seventy, which was a missionary quorum at the time, not functioning as an administrative unit like it does in the present day Church. Abel was ordained by Zebedee Coltrin on 20 December. All of those documents are at the LDS Church History Library. It is also important to note that LDS leaders were fully aware that Abel was a black man; Church documents call him a “colored” man. In US census records he was listed as a mulatto, which in a nineteenth-century racial and legal context equaled black.

Wayment: That was my question. There’s been some modern discussion on how black he was, if that’s an OK way to say it, and you’re saying that there is documentation that they interpret him as an African American.

Reeve: That’s right. Elijah Abel was in Cincinnati in the 1840s, and there was a Church conference that was held there. This was in 1843, so Joseph Smith was still alive. Joseph Smith was not at the conference but several Apostles were. The minutes of this conference survive in Church records, and Elijah Abel was present at this Church conference, and the Apostles said, (paraphrasing) “Well, we aren’t comfortable with a colored man preaching to white people, so he should relegate his preaching to the black population.” And Elijah Able responds by saying, “I don’t have a problem with that, I’m a member of the Seventy. It’s a missionary calling; I’ll preach to my own race.”

I’m citing that example to say that the documents support that LDS leaders fully understood him to be a black man; they called him a “colored” man. There are later remembrances that suggest that somehow Joseph Smith...
stripped him of his priesthood. There is just simply no evidence that this was the case. Abel was still a practicing Latter-day Saint in 1843, when Joseph Smith was still alive, and LDS Apostles were identifying him as a black man who had the priesthood and who was preaching the gospel.

Wayment: *And actively in the Third Quorum of the Seventy.*

Reeve: And the same holds true for Q. Walker Lewis as late as 1847. Brigham Young was on record as favorably aware of Q. Walker Lewis as a black man and a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. Minutes of a meeting in Winter Quarters substantiate this, where Brigham Young referred to Q. Walker Lewis as one of our best elders, an African in Lowell, Massachusetts, and a barber. So, Brigham Young himself is on record as late as 1847 as favorably aware of a black ordained priesthood holder.

Wayment: *So that brings us to an interesting juncture. The essay, and I’m sure you’re aware of this, has been broadly interpreted as placing, if you will, blame—maybe that’s the wrong word to use—but kind of placing on Brigham’s shoulders the blame for instituting the priesthood and temple restrictions. So you’re saying that Brigham started out early accepting the ordination of a black man, and then in 1852 in the territorial legislature, he made some of those famous statements. Tell me, first of all, what historically is happening there? The recovery of whiteness or kind of trying to participate in American whiteness seems to be one factor, but what else could you add to that?*

Reeve: Well, concerns of race mixing permeated American society. So there were laws dating back to the colonial period against white people marrying slaves, and not just slaves, but white people marrying black people. The majority of states in the nation had laws against interracial marriage between black and white. Like I mentioned earlier, even Native American tribes passed laws against their tribal members marrying black people. By December of 1847, Brigham Young became aware of Enoch Lewis’s marriage to Mary Webster in the Lowell, Massachusetts branch. Enoch was black and Mary was white. He also learned of the corrupt version of plural marriage that another black Mormon, William McCary, introduced at Winter Quarters. It involved interracial, sexualized, and unauthorized “sealings.” In response, Brigham Young spoke out strongly against race mixing; he even advocated capital punishment as the penalty.

Wayment: *So that began to happen between 1847 to 1852?*

Reeve: Yes. December of 1847 Brigham Young responded to news of both interracial circumstances. But the surviving minutes of the 1847 meeting at Winter Quarters do not mention a racial priesthood restriction. It was not until 1852 that Brigham Young openly articulated a priesthood restriction.

In terms of the “Race and the Priesthood” essay, and the perception that it places the blame, if that’s the right word, on Brigham Young, I think there are all kinds of important contextual elements coming into place here. I think that it’s a mistake to suggest that the priesthood ban was a result of Brigham Young’s inherent racism, or that he grew up as a racist. I do not believe that is what the essay implies. We have, like I mentioned, a very open racial attitude in March of 1847 from Brigham Young, and then you start to see a deterioration in Brigham Young’s own racial attitude between 1847 and 1852, and race mixing was a significant factor in that process. So I don’t see it as something inborn or inherent in Brigham Young.
Wayment: So one thing we could say, based on what you’re saying, is that the essay is not blaming someone per se, but maybe a larger cultural phenomenon?

Reeve: Well, yes, I think there are just so many moving parts. Certainly then, as far as historians have been able to determine, the priesthood restriction began with Brigham Young. There are no known statements from Joseph Smith making a race-based priesthood restriction or a temple restriction. In fact, the evidence seems to be really conclusive to the contrary, that Joseph Smith was aware of black people who were ordained to the priesthood, and that in the case of Elijah Abel, he sanctioned the ordination. No known statements from Joseph Smith of a race-based priesthood or temple restriction exist. Published in the Times and Seasons in Nauvoo is an open racial vision for admission to the Nauvoo temple. It announces that Nauvoo Saints will welcome all people, and specifically mentions people of all colors, into God’s holy house.

Elijah Abel was amongst the very first to do baptisms for the dead at Nauvoo, with no proscription at all against his participation. We know that he received his washing and anointing in the Kirtland Temple, which was as far as the temple ordinances were developed to that point. There is incontrovertible evidence that he was welcomed into that ritual. He wasn’t in Nauvoo when the endowment was introduced, so I don’t know what would have happened if he had been there. A belated remembrance records that Abel applied to Brigham Young for his endowment after he arrived in Utah, and Brigham Young told him no. In 1879, Abel did apply to John Taylor for his endowment and to be sealed to his wife, and that opened an investigation into Elijah Abel’s status as a black priesthood holder. If the priesthood restriction was unambiguously in place as late as 1879, then why the need for an investigation? As late as 1879, the leader of the church was unsure of how to proceed regarding race, the priesthood, and temple admission. After conducting an investigation in which Abel produced his priesthood certificates, Taylor allowed Abel’s priesthood to stand, but denied him temple admission.

So, once again, there is all kinds of evidence that LDS leaders knew Abel as a black person and as a priesthood holder. So, in terms of laying it all on Brigham Young, I guess that is kind of what we’re grappling with. The “Race and the Priesthood” essay is such a truncated exploration of this. It is difficult to capture the complexity of the priesthood and temple restrictions’ evolving history in such a short essay. If people are concerned that it’s all being laid at Brigham Young’s feet, ultimately I think it’s much more complicated than that. Yes, the restrictions began under Brigham Young and then take on a life of their own. They developed in fits and starts across the course of the nineteenth century. A lot more people were involved in that process, especially as the restrictions accumulated a growing precedent. I don’t see the restrictions as firmly in place until 1908. The last brick in the wall of exclusion, I think, was Joseph F. Smith in a meeting that took place in 1908. Joseph F. Smith in this meeting falsely remembered that Elijah Abel’s priesthood had been declared null and void by Joseph Smith himself. I think that was the last brick in the priesthood and temple restrictions becoming entrenched and firmly in place.

In my estimation, you have to erase from collective Mormon memory the black priesthood holders that complicate the story. Joseph F. Smith, in that 1908 meeting, basically said that the priesthood restriction had been in place from the beginning, God put it in place and man cannot do anything about it; it would take a revelation to get rid of it. In fact, that is what happened seventy years later; it did take a revelation to get rid of it. But that new memory that it had always been a white priesthood and that temple admission had always been white is fully solidified in 1908, when he erased from collective Mormon memory the black priesthood holders that complicated that narrative.

Wayment: And later, others developed the idea into a fully formed wall to protect this idea.

Reeve: That’s right.

Wayment: I want to put you in a difficult situation for a minute. So you’re a teacher, a Latter-day Saint teacher, of college-aged and high school-aged students, and you have a student who has a very simplistic narrative, that the Church is racist and our past is racist, and yet you’ve painted a wonderfully complex picture and very granular. How do you help speak to that? And I know that kind of puts you out of your academic mindset, but what could you do to help, or help a teacher, find a way to talk about this without placing blame on a single entity? That’s a large question, I apologize for it.

Reeve: Yeah, well you know, what I see, and what’s really striking to me in exploring this, is that Latter-day Saints were converting to Mormonism from a variety of backgrounds and understandings about the political issues of their day, and a major political issue in the nineteenth century was race, slavery, the status of African Americans, and abolitionism. And Mormonism was casting a wide net in the nineteenth century and drawing all of these people
in, and they came into Mormonism with their political positions intact. So, Mormonism brought into the fold abolitionists and anti-abolitionists, white slave masters, black slaves, and free blacks; all of them were welcomed into the Mormon gospel fold.

Other religious traditions in the nineteenth century ended up splitting or going through schisms as a result of those same hot political issues. Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians either split or experienced a schism. Mormonism escaped those fates because they accepted people from all of those categories into the gospel fold. It came to a head in 1852, when Brigham Young tried to figure out how to make order out of the diverse group of people who had gathered to the Great Basin. What should Utah Territory do with the black slaves who had been brought to the territory by their white slave masters who had converted to Mormonism in the South? Some of the black slaves were also Mormon converts themselves. Brigham Young and the territorial legislature determined that white people would preside over black, and free would preside over bound. That is the order that Brigham Young and the legislature created out of the diverse population that had gathered to the Great Basin. So a variety of outside political positions became inside theological positions as this played out across the course of the nineteenth century. Those who converted to Mormonism brought their political and racial attitudes with them. Unfortunately, this had an impact on how the Mormon racial story played out theologically.

**Wayment:** That's fascinating. That's a really great point to make, and I think you've helped me see something there. Can I push you a little bit harder on that? Tell me about 1978. So, it was a long time later and the racial issue was pretty hot in '78, but it seems in America it had reached its pinnacle a generation earlier. Do we wait till '78 in part because of what you described? Mormons exist out of Africa, they've got “one drop” of African ancestry in that context. Mormonism had adopted a one drop policy in 1907, that is to say one drop of African ancestry would exclude a person from being admitted to the temple or to the priesthood. In 1978, then, we have a variety of other factors that came into play: Mormonism moved into international locations where mixed races were the de facto racial heritage of the bulk of the population. Brazil, for example, South Africa, and other Central and South American countries all had a mixture of these populations as a result of the slave trade. Good luck trying to figure out if a person had “one drop” of African ancestry in that context. Mormonism had adopted a one drop policy in 1907, that is that one drop of African ancestry would exclude a person from being admitted to the temple or to the priesthood. In the United States, let alone in countries with large percentages of mixed-race ancestry, it was almost impossible to ferret out one drop. We know now from DNA evidence that we are really intermixed—one big family across the globe.

**Reeve:** Yes, I think that the notion that priesthood and temples were white from the beginning really became entrenched in the twentieth century. No one remembered Elijah Abel and Q. Walker Lewis. They had been forgotten—erased from collective Mormon memory. The fact that there were black priesthood holders to complicate the Mormon racial understanding was gone. Mormons had arrived by the 1950s in terms of their acceptance as Americans. The Mormon notion of what it meant to be an ideal American finally dovetailed quite nicely with what mainstream society thought it meant to be an ideal American in the 1950s. Mormons had really made themselves over into these apple-pie-eating, baseball-playing, flag-waving, uber-Americans. They were monogamous and white and very traditional, and it fit with the post-World War II vision of what it meant to be an American—the Leave It to Beaver vision. But, right at the moment when Mormons arrived and are viewed as acceptable, the nation started to move in a different direction. The civil rights movement began, and rather than moving with the nation, Mormons entrenched behind segregated priesthood and temples.

David O. McKay would, however, begin the slow process of change. He went to South Africa in 1954, the same year as Brown v. Board of Education, and in South Africa you have people who looked white who were being denied ordination into the priesthood because they couldn’t trace their ancestry out of Africa. So the policy as it was being implemented in South Africa, because of the mixture of the races there, was basically guilty until proven innocent. You had to be able to trace your ancestry out of Africa in order to be eligible for ordination to the priesthood. David O. McKay unilaterally reversed this policy to a policy of innocent until proven guilty. He said it’s better to err on the side of mercy. “Why are we preventing these people from being ordained to the priesthood?” he questioned. “Let’s give them the benefit of the doubt—let’s ordain them to the priesthood. Then, if we find out later that there happens to be some African ancestry, we can deal with that, but why prevent a whole group of people, who at least on the surface look white, from being ordained to the priesthood?”

He also interpreted the priesthood restriction to apply only to those of African descent, so black Fijians, Filipino Negritos, Australian Aborigines, and Egyptians were all ordained to the priesthood before 1978. Then, you have a variety of other factors that came into play: Mormonism moved into international locations where mixed races were the de facto racial heritage of the bulk of the population. Brazil, for example, South Africa, and other Central and South American countries all had a mixture of these populations as a result of the slave trade. Good luck trying to figure out if a person had “one drop” of African ancestry in that context. Mormonism had adopted a one drop policy in 1907, that is that one drop of African ancestry would exclude a person from being admitted to the temple or to the priesthood. In the United States, let alone in countries with large percentages of mixed-race ancestry, it was almost impossible to ferret out one drop. We know now from DNA evidence that we are really intermixed—one big family across the globe.
The São Paulo Brazil Temple was announced, and you had faithful, black Latter-day Saints who were contributing their hard earned money to a building they knew they wouldn’t be able to enter. LDS leaders from Salt Lake flew to Brazil and met those Saints, and it touched them. They became more concerned about how they might let them into the temple instead of how they were going to keep them out.

I think also that the Spirit led out in front of LDS policy that dragged behind. On the continent of Africa itself, for example, entire congregations considered themselves to be Latter-day Saints based upon LDS literature they had encountered. They wrote to Church headquarters asking for missionaries, asking for more literature, asking for representatives to baptize them. They formed their own congregations. That was another pressure that brought the question to the forefront. Then you also have to take into account the various personalities amongst the leadership. Spencer W. Kimball, as an Apostle, was on record as early as 1963 calling the priesthood restriction a “possible error,” which he said the Lord could forgive. So, he is on record as early as 1963 with a very open attitude. You have Hugh B. Brown, who in 1969 attempted to remove the priesthood restriction simply by policy vote. He argued that “there was not a revelation that put it in place, so let’s remove it by vote; it’s a policy, so let’s get rid of it.” McKay himself had interpreted the restrictions as policy, not doctrine. Hugh B. Brown, however, was unable to achieve consensus. Harold B. Lee believed that it would take a revelation, and so that delayed things. Harold B. Lee became the next President. He had a short tenure, and then Spencer W. Kimball became President, and like I said, was on record with a more open attitude and seemed willing to take his case to the Lord and reported a revelation in June of 1978.

Wayment: That’s fascinating. That’s some great detail there. What do you feel needs to be part of this discussion to make it work for the average reader?

Reeve: So I think the question about Brigham Young—I don’t know if maybe I didn’t explore all the possible avenues there. I guess for some people, or for a lot of people, it comes down to this question to prophetic fallibility and what we should do with that as Latter-day Saints. For me, I don’t have a vision of a micromanaging God who directs every finger lift. In fact, I don’t see God revoking a prophet’s agency when he makes him a prophet. If a prophet has agency, then a prophet can make a mistake. For me, the framework that works to help me not just with this but with a variety of issues that come up in navigating sometimes challenging waters is a principle articulated by Ezra Taft Benson when he was an Apostle. He articulated what’s called the “Samuel principle.” He referred to the Old Testament when the children of Israel asked for a king and Samuel told them no. They wanted to be like other kingdoms around them, and finally God said to Samuel, “Samuel they haven’t rejected you. They’ve rejected me. Give them what they want.” President Benson said that sometimes, within certain parameters, God gives us what we want and lets us suffer the consequences. It was a decision with long-term ramifications that lasted for several generations to switch to a monarchy. God allowed the children of Israel to live with the consequences of a monarchy.

I see that principle as something that is at play, for example, with Joseph Smith and the 116 lost manuscript pages. God gave Joseph Smith what he wanted and let him suffer the consequences. God called his prophet to repentance and in the revelation he gave to Joseph Smith he told him that he lost the ability to translate and that he had trusted more in the arm of flesh than he trusted in God. God let Joseph Smith suffer the consequences. The other example I think about is in Kirtland, Ohio, when the Saints wanted to open a bank. They applied for a bank charter, but the state of Ohio rejected the application. Joseph Smith decided to move ahead anyway. He opened a bank without a charter and called it an anti-banking institution. And a lot of Latter-day Saints in Kirtland believed that Joseph Smith had given them assurances that their money was safe. When the bank failed, they lost their money and their faith. It led to what’s called the Kirtland apostasy. Some of Joseph Smith’s closest associates dissented in that period. I look at that experience and say, “Well, God obviously knew the bank would fail, why not tell Joseph Smith simply, ‘Hey bad idea, you’re not a banker. Don’t go there—it’s going to cause all kinds of problems and people are going to lose their faith over this.’” God didn’t intervene; he let Joseph Smith open the bank and suffer the consequences.

When Brigham Young announced a priesthood restriction to the territorial legislature, God didn’t come down and stop him from doing so—he didn’t intervene. He didn’t say that in implementing a racial priesthood and temple restriction that it would lead to an entrenched policy that would be problematic to remove later and would bring a significant weight upon the Church. He let Brigham Young articulate a policy, a rationale for a priesthood restriction that I think took on a life of its own and let us as a body of Saints suffer the consequences. Some white Latter-day Saints grew increasingly secure in feelings of racial superiority, beliefs in divine curses centered on skin
color, and the development of a theology that suggested that our brothers and sisters are somehow inferior to us.

The other thing I think is important for people to realize is that Brigham Young used one rationale—and one rationale only—for the priesthood restriction. He never deviated from it. I hear so much confusion about the notion that we had a racial priesthood restriction because of the Book of Mormon. Brigham Young never drew upon the Book of Mormon, never drew upon the Book of Abraham, never drew upon the Book of Moses. He used one rationale and one rationale only. He said that Cain killed Abel, and because Cain killed Abel, all of Abel’s decedents would need to receive the priesthood before Cain’s supposed decedents could receive the priesthood. And he believed Cain’s decedents were black people—that the mark that God put upon Cain was a black skin. That idea predates Mormonism by a thousand years; it is a part of the broader Judeo-Christian tradition, and Mormonism inherited it and used it to its own ends.

Wayment: *A curse-of-Ham kind of thing?*

Reeve: A curse of Cain, and then there was a corresponding curse of Ham, two different kinds of curses that played out. Brigham Young brought that curse of Cain into Mormonism and gave it theological weight. He never deviated from that; he never used “fence-sitter” or “less valiant in the war in heaven.” That was an explanation that grew up outside of official channels, because Brigham Young set up a theological problem in the curse of Cain explanation. Joseph Smith said we will be punished for our own sins and not for Adam’s transgression, and yet Brigham Young’s curse of Cain held the supposed descendants of Cain responsible for a murder they took no part in. Why aren’t white people responsible for David’s murder of Uriah? Why isn’t there a multigenerational curse around that?

Wayment: *So they have to seek an explanation, scripturally.*

Reeve: So other Church leaders had this alternate explanation. They thought there must be some sort of agency at play here, because Brigham Young’s accusation removed agency from the equation. Black people must have made some decision in the premortal existence that led to them being born into black skin and this cursed lineage. So, sometimes the invented explanation was that they were neutral in the War in Heaven. Brigham Young rejected that outright in 1869. To the School of Prophets, he said there were no neutral spirits in the War in Heaven; everyone chose sides. Then Brigham Young returned immediately to the curse of Cain explanation for black skin and the priesthood restriction. But that didn’t get rid of the idea of neutrality or black people being “less valiant”; other leaders would return to it. It would shift from neutral to less valiant.

I think that it’s an important point for people to be aware of, that there’s only one explanation that Brigham Young gave. He never deviated from it throughout his entire life. He resorted only to the Bible, the book of Genesis, and Cain’s murder of Abel. People in the 1880s started to refer to the Book of Abraham, like George Q. Cannon, and then that would take on a life of its own. The Book of Abraham wasn’t canonized until 1880, and Brigham Young never resorted to it. Joseph Smith gave us the Book of Abraham, and there’s no record of him using it as justification for a race-based priesthood restriction. So it’s important to have all that in our understanding of what the only rationale was for a prophet/president, and it was the curse of Cain, and it created a theological problem in the way that he articulated it.

The other important idea to keep in mind is that all of the previous explanations have now been disavowed by this generation of leaders. The First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve approved the “Race and the Priesthood” essay. It disavows all of the previous justifications. There is no need to defend past statements on race when this generation of leaders has disavowed them. And this generation of leaders condemns all racism, past and present. That includes racism within the Church. It has now been condemned.
One way to measure increased use of the Book of Mormon is to count and analyze the number of times the book is cited or discussed in general conference.

Joseph Smith referred to the Book of Mormon as the keystone of our religion; however, the book was not frequently studied in worship services or in gospel instruction in the early Church. In the 1970s, focus on the scriptures increased as the curriculum for adult gospel study shifted from manuals discussing the scriptures to the actual scripture texts. The Book of Mormon became part of the correlated curriculum for Sunday School Gospel Doctrine lessons, and Seminaries and Institutes also increased their use of scriptural content. In response, Church leaders oversaw the preparation of a fully cross-referenced version of the standard works, enabling publication of the first LDS edition of the Bible in 1979 and the triple combination in 1981. President Spencer W. Kimball had told those involved in these projects that the goal was “to assist in improving doctrinal scholarship throughout the Church.” Church focus on the Book of Mormon intensified in 1985 when Ezra Taft Benson became President of the Church, emphasizing the importance of the Book of Mormon as the keystone of our witness of Christ, our doctrine, and our testimonies.
Study Background and Purpose

*Role of President Ezra Taft Benson.* Following his call as Church President, Ezra Taft Benson felt an inspired prompting that the Lord was calling him to bring the Book of Mormon to the minds and hearts of Church members throughout the world. During a meeting of the General Authorities in the temple early in February 1986, Gordon B. Hinckley prophesied that President Benson would become the Church’s strongest advocate of the Book of Mormon.⁷

A month later, in March, President Benson explained his prompting to the General Authorities and challenged them to reread the Book of Mormon before the April conference. In the solemn assembly where he was sustained as Church President, he told those assembled, “Now in our day, the Lord has revealed the need to reemphasize the Book of Mormon.” In the general conference of October 1986, President Benson promised members that “there is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book.”⁸

The General Authorities were taking the president’s admonitions seriously. The two general conferences of 1986 included 301 references to the Book of Mormon. By April 1987 there had been so many that Elder L. Tom Perry began his talk by saying, “President, I’m starting to receive the distinct impression that we’ve been listening to you. I, too, will take my text from the Book of Mormon.”⁹

*Study of citations.* Having observed the development in the 1970s, Noel B. Reynolds suggested in 1999, “One way to measure increased use of the Book of Mormon is to count and analyze the number of times the book is cited or discussed in general conference. The frequency of such citations reflects the extent to which Book of Mormon passages have entered the common discourse of Latter-day Saints, as well as indicating the current emphasis placed on the Book of Mormon by Church authorities.”¹¹

In writing this 1999 article, Reynolds used a preliminary version of what became the LDS Scripture Citation Index to track frequency of general conference citations to the Book of Mormon. He found that they represented approximately 12 percent of total general conference citations to scriptures before President Benson’s 1986 challenge to the Church to increase Book of Mormon study. These citations “jumped to 40 percent over the next year, then leveled off at about the 25 percent mark—almost twice the earlier rate.”¹²

In the extensive historical study of twentieth-century Church attitudes toward and study of the Book of Mormon that is the major focus of his 1999 article, Reynolds acknowledged the influence of President Ezra Taft Benson. He concluded, “Probably more than any other single factor, his counsel stimulated an enthusiastic wave of Book of Mormon study and focus that continues to this day.”¹⁴

*Use of the current LDS Scripture Citation Index.* The current index, developed and refined by Stephen W. Liddle and Richard C. Galbraith, provides a way to observe more specifically how Church leaders have cited the scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, in their speeches and publications. References to each scripture are recorded, whether it is quoted, discussed, mentioned, or referenced as additional support for a related point. Clicking on the author-title-date identification brings up a copy of the talk or article with all scriptures indicated and the requested scripture highlighted so its context can be easily found.

Church scholars have been using this index as a tool in a series of beneficial studies (e.g., Woodger and Brodrick,¹⁵ Spackman,¹⁶ Farnsworth et al.¹⁷). At the end of their article, which examined citations to the Pauline epistles, Farnsworth et al. posed a question for further research: Do the Apostles refer equally to other scriptures, such as the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants?²⁸
Purpose of this study. The present study responds to the challenge of Farnsworth et al. by examining the LDS Scripture Citation Index to discover frequency and note some general patterns of usage of Book of Mormon scriptures by prophets, seers, and revelators during general conference. In his 1999 study, Reynolds counted overall usage statistics in addition to numbers indicating general extensiveness of use (brief reference, main topic, etc.). With the completed citation index, we were able to focus on which specific scriptures had been referenced most frequently by the First Presidency and Apostles, noting the depth with which these speakers used each verse, and the specific teachings they cited to develop and support it.

Because the talks are accessible on the index, we could read and make note of ways the prophets, seers, and revelators used these scriptures to instruct and inspire. We hope to encourage Church members to follow prophetic examples in applying Book of Mormon scriptures to their lives.

Method
We selected 1965 to 2014 as the time period for the study: 20 years before President Benson’s administration, the 8 years that comprised it, and 20 years thereafter. We began by filtering the citation index for these years and for the content of general conference addresses. As we went through the listed citations, we examined only the discourses of prophets, seers, and revelators. Talks given by individuals before becoming Apostles were not included; the year when each was called to the Quorum of the Twelve, we began examining and recording information regarding each succeeding address. To ensure accuracy, we verified that each address included in the study had been published.

The citation index lists scriptures in commonly cited units as well as individual verses. For example, the single verse Moroni 10:3 was used 5 times, but the unit Moroni 10:3–5 was utilized 7 times and the unit Moroni 10:4–5 was cited 24 times. The varied combinations often enhanced emphasis or perspective for different purposes: Moroni 10:3 emphasizes God’s mercy throughout the dispensations, Moroni 10:3–5 completes Moroni’s promise that the Holy Ghost will testify to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, and Moroni 10:4–5 emphasizes prayer as well as the power of the Holy Ghost to make known the truth of all things. We counted and ranked ordered specific references only in the contexts in which they had been cited by the speakers. We began by calculating the overall frequency with which scriptures had been cited during our target period, compiling a list of those with the highest numbers of citations and noting trends and patterns in the usage. We then compiled a list of the 11 most cited verses and studied the talks in which they appeared, recording basic information about the ways the scriptures were used and details about the topics covered and points supported by each.

The Results section of this article includes the overall statistical and comparative information. The Discussion section presents the subject matter, content, and purposeful nature of the uses of the 11 most frequently cited scriptures.

Results
Frequency of scripture citations. For the dates 1965 through 2014, we found a total of 40,102 citations of scripture in general conferences. The New Testament was cited most often (n = 12,824, 32 percent), followed by the Book of Mormon (n = 10,203, just over 25 percent), the Doctrine and Covenants (n = 9,952, just under 25 percent), the Old Testament (n = 4,764, 12 percent), and the Pearl of Great Price (n = 2,359, 6 percent). During the same time period, those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators cited the Book of Mormon 6,240 times in general conference, about 61 percent of the overall Book of Mormon citations. These citations included both single and multiple references, comprising 2,627 different scriptural passages. Verses in the Book of Alma were cited most (n = 1,507), and verses in the Words of Mormon were cited least (n = 3). However, when the number of pages per book was considered, verses in the Book of Moroni were the most cited, with 37 citations per page, followed by verses in the Book of Enos, with 19 citations per page. Verses found in Words of Mormon were still cited least, with only 1 citation per page. Table 1 shows the total number of citations for each book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books in the Book of Mormon</th>
<th>Total number of citations</th>
<th>Citations per page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory materials</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nephi</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Nephi</td>
<td>1097</td>
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We found 1,600 Book of Mormon passages cited only once by prophets and Apostles and, in contrast, 82 cited 10 times or more. These 82 passages made up 25 percent of all scriptural citations included in the general conference sermons of members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the time period we studied.

We calculated Book of Mormon citations by members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in general conference addresses in the 20 years before President Benson's administration and found 1,233. During the 8 years of his presidency, the prophets, seers, and revelators cited the Book of Mormon 1,276 times, and in the 20 years following his passing they used 3,323 citations. Because of the difference in the length of the time periods, we calculated the average number of references per conference. Thus before President Benson's emphasis on Book of Mormon study, these particular leaders cited the Book of Mormon an average of 30.8 times per conference. During his administration they cited it an average of 79.8 times, and in the 20 years following his passing they included an average of 83.1 citations per conference.

Book of Mormon citations by President Benson. President Benson led by example. We tabulated President Benson’s own use of the Book of Mormon in general conference addresses before and after he was ordained President of the Church in November 1985. Between 1965 and 1985 he spoke in general conference 40 times and cited the Book of Mormon 146 times. During his presidency he gave 23 general conference addresses and cited the Book of Mormon 256 times. In order to compare the two time periods and take into account the number of addresses per conference, we calculated the rate of Book of Mormon citations per conference talk before and after he was ordained President: 3.7 before and 11.1 after.

This increase in Book of Mormon citations by all conference speakers as well as by the group consisting of the prophets, seers, and revelators clearly demonstrates that President Benson’s prophetic priority made a striking difference in Book of Mormon emphasis during his presidency and during the succeeding 20 years. President Benson indeed fulfilled the calling he felt concerning the Book of Mormon, and he made remarkable changes during his administration which have lasted considerably beyond.

Table 1. Books in the Book of Mormon

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books in the Book of Mormon</th>
<th>Total number of citations</th>
<th>Citations per page</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enos</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarom</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omni</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of Mormon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helaman</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Fourth Nephi</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ether</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroni</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total 6,240</td>
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Overall numbers of citations reveal the increasing emphasis on studying and teaching the Book of Mormon over a period of 48 years: 20 before, 8 during, and 20 after President Benson’s administration. From these statistics we learn that the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have been emphasizing its teachings and examples to help Church members find answers to their questions and guidance for living their lives. But we have been interested not only in how many times they have used these scriptures, but in how they have incorporated them into their talks, and what they taught through them. To explore these matters, we calculated the verses that have received the most citations and studied their use in the talks, which we accessed through the LDS Scripture Citation Index. Because of ties in important places, instead of the popular “Top 10” calculation, we offer a Top 11. Table 2 shows the 11 scriptures which were cited 30 times or more during the period we covered in this study, including key words or phrases to make them easy to identify.

Table 2. Book of Mormon passages cited more than 30 times by members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in general conference addresses, 1965–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book of Mormon reference</th>
<th>Key statement or phrase(s)</th>
<th>Number of citations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah 3:19</td>
<td>“For the natural man is an enemy to God”</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Book of Mormon Citations in General Conference, 1965–2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book of Mormon reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Nephi 27:27</td>
<td>“Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am”</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroni 10:32</td>
<td>“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him”</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi 31:20</td>
<td>“Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ”</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma 41:10</td>
<td>“Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness”</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi 2:27</td>
<td>“They are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men”</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi 3:7</td>
<td>“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded”</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi 2:25</td>
<td>“Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy”</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma 42:8</td>
<td>“The great plan of happiness”</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah 18:9</td>
<td>“Mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort”</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah 5:2</td>
<td>“We have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually”</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

*Classification of citations.* The study conducted by Reynolds (1999) with a developmental version of the citation index grouped citations on levels of use intensity: (1) brief reference, (2) brief discussion (one or two paragraphs), (3) a major component of the talk, and (4) the main topic. Results showed that the references on the brief discussion level “have been consistently higher and have increased over the years far more than substantial ones.” However, Reynolds noted that citation levels 3 and 4 “increased and reached their peak during 1985–89, most likely influenced by President Benson’s 1986 address.”

As the current edition of the LDS Scripture Citation Index makes the talks available, highlighting the target scriptures, we were able to look more closely at directions and meanings involved with the use of the most commonly cited scriptures. Because the brief references and short discussions have been decisively more prevalent than the major component and main topic levels, we adapted Reynolds’s categorization to more accurately represent the use we were making of the citation index.

We subdivided the brief reference category, as we found two kinds of brief references that we considered distinct. A frequent strategy was an indirect reference to a scripture either singly or with others in parenthesis preceded by the word see—acknowledgement of relationship without development of content. The higher level of brief reference, the most frequent citation form overall, was a brief allusion to the meaning of a scripture in which a key word or phrase (occasionally the complete quotation) would be given with the content noted but very little if any development. These allusions were a specific informational support rather than a mere indication of availability.

Comparable to Reynolds’s study, we used a category of brief discussion: Generally these ranged from one substantial paragraph to three or four shorter paragraphs—occasionally five or six one-sentence paragraphs. Since speakers vary in the length and developmental level for their paragraphs, we did not attempt a precise delineation. For some of the scriptures, we found a number of treatments that had the depth but not the extensiveness of a major component. For these scriptures we added a subcategory titled major development.

For our most intensive category, we combined Reynolds’s full-talk and major-component treatments, because both were relatively rare and not all the scriptures had a treatment in the full-talk category. The major components were not identified by countable elements, but by presence of a high level of explanation, application, or clear synthesis with additional scriptures. For the sake of clarity and efficiency, we present our results in a series of tables. Because not all scriptures were used in all categories, slight shifts in numbers and labels of listed categories have been necessary to represent usage as accurately as possible.

For ease in making connections and discerning patterns, we have sequenced the Top 11 scriptures by frequency of use; as far as possible, we have considered the relationship of topics within the usage order. Although we have used numerical data, classification has not been formulaic. We’re dealing with individual ideas and often experiences expressed in varied individual ways; some subjectivity has been unavoidable.

**Becoming like Christ.** We were not surprised that the basic content area of the most cited scriptures involves becoming more like the Savior. The verse cited most frequently between 1965 and 2014 was Mosiah 3:19. It was cited 101 times: 11 of them before President Benson’s administration, 90 afterward. Prophets, seers, and revelators have cited it 50 times. The verse is long,
including many important teachings; we noted only three talks in which it was quoted in its entirety. Thus most of the quotations and citations involve a part of it, even when used as a major theme.

“For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Nature of usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect reference with “see”</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Natural man by far the most common; also submissiveness, patience, childlike qualities, suffering, cheerfulness</td>
<td>Parenthetical references are made to help readers in making general extensions of topics and ideas being discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Natural man most frequent; also conversion, Atonement, spiritual enticings, childlike qualities, self-mastery</td>
<td>Additional contexts tend to be more abstract with more doctrinal depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Natural man followed by childlike characteristics, also pride/humility</td>
<td>Comments help put the scripture in context, indicate importance, make brief applications or extensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major theme or focus of entire talk</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1. Repentance 2. Nature of change when putting off natural man 3. Pride 4. “As A Child” talk focus</td>
<td>1. Elder Nelson used it to climax his discussion of the fruits of repentance (2007) and to enhance the conversion story of a friend (2009). 2. Elder Bednar (2007) synthesized scriptures and teachings on purity. 3. The section on humility climaxes the landmark address on pride (Benson, 1989). 4. The theme of King Benjamin speaking is carried throughout the talk in discussing such topics as choice, change, submission, and the Holy Ghost (Eyring, 2006).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prophets, seers, and revelators included this Book of Mormon verse in their sermons 46 times between 1965 and 2014. Although the first part of this verse refers to judging, prophets focused only on becoming like Christ. This scripture was used with different degrees of emphasis and applied in different contexts, but the message of emulation is consistent and clear.

“And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect reference with “see”</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Savior’s expectations for us, His example as a pattern for our lives, the nature of repentance</td>
<td>Parenthetical references to this scripture in relation to these topics remind audience members of the overarching role of His example as well as His explicit instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Comfort in despair, treatment of others, path of discipleship, self-mastery, forgiveness, honesty, priesthood</td>
<td>Contexts extend into a wider variety of applications and relationships than the indirect references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>What it means to know Christ, what He outlined for us during his earthly ministry; what we can become as His children; how we can progress in the plan of salvation</td>
<td>These discussions include a strong eternal perspective, with emphasis on being and becoming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1. “Every virtue in its perfection.” (Benson, 1972) 2. Conduct for priesthood holders (Benson, 1983) 3. Doing good, resisting temptation, being obedient, blessing those in need, cleansing the temple 4. Savior’s parable of himself as the Good Shepherd (Monson, 1992); reprise of the Good Shepherd emphasizing the Savior’s love for us with new example (Monson, 2008)</td>
<td>1. Content is idealistic, personal, abstract (e.g., inspiration, personal revelation). 2. Specific actions and behaviors are treated. 3. Elder Christofferson (2006) discussed activities of the Savior’s daily life that we can emulate. 4. The parable serves as a context in which all other lists of actions and activities become significant, with examples of individuals audience members can easily understand and admire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second-most cited scripture by the First Presidency and the Apostles, 3 Nephi 27:27, also admonishes spiritual change that transforms lives.
The third-most quoted and cited scripture by the prophets, seers, and revelators also involves the all-encompassing challenge of becoming more like Christ. The First Presidency and the Twelve referred 40 times to Moroni 10:32. There are so many principles involved in the scripture that most references quote it only partially; we noticed four full quotations: one accompanied by brief development, one by strong development, and two with no development included.

“Yes, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.”

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</table>
| Major theme or focus of entire talk | 3   | 1. “Lifelong and eternal process,” with traits portrayed in the Sermon on the Mount and other scriptures  
2. Kindness, helpfulness, virtue, charity, and other attributes of the divine nature (Benson, 1986)  
3. Talk focused entirely on spiritual concepts related to becoming like the Savior (Hunter, 1994) | 1. Elder Peterson (1982) treated the theme in a synthesis of scriptures quoting and portraying the Savior.  
2. President Benson (1986) described idealistic but attainable attributes, in contrast to ethereal attributes of 1972.  
3. Rather than giving characteristics or activities as the other had done, President Hunter focused on broader eternal perspectives concerning who Christ was and what He did that make it so important that we should accept and follow the example of His exemplary life. |

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<th>Nature of usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect reference with “see.”</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Eternal marriage, repentance, grace, perfection, accountability, Christ, consecration, humility</td>
<td>These parenthetical allusions bring Christ’s involvement, love, and perfecting power into a variety of topics/principles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maintaining Christ’s standards. A number of the most cited scriptures are concerned with standards of conduct that the Brethren hope Church members will follow. The fourth-most cited scripture by the First Presidency and the Apostles in general conference over the period that we studied was 2 Nephi 31:20, a rather comprehensive conduct guide. These brethren cited it in 39 speeches. We found no citations in which the scripture itself was the central focus or even a major theme of a talk, perhaps because it goes in so many directions. It was often quoted, partially quoted, or referenced to give impact and reinforcement to an important theme such as maintaining hope, studying the words of Christ, or enduring to the end.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”

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<th>Nature of usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect reference with “see”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pressing forward, studying scriptures, enduring, maintaining hope</td>
<td>References reinforced the hope experienced with the passing of a loved one and the endurance required in a struggle with cancer.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Faith, celestial marriage, burdens, scripture comprehension, worldwide Church, success pattern, Church membership, grace, endurance, pioneers</td>
<td>Many allusions with brief comments invite listeners to come unto Christ, love Him, feel His love, be perfected in Him, and become like Him. Emphasis is on all individuals worldwide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Brief discussion            | 7   | Imperfect people, endurance, last days, physical appetites, chastening, repentance, the Savior | These discussions center on the love, power, and support of the Savior in various trials and dangers; healing/perfecting, repentance/conversion, spiritual control. |

| Major theme                 | 1   | Sacrifice, repentance, Holy Ghost, ordinances, covenants, overcoming habits, broken heart and contrite spirit | Pres. Benson (1979) quoted the entire scripture, counseling members to deny themselves of ungodliness and offer a broken heart and contrite spirit as one of four ways to practice the principle of sacrifice. |
The fifth-most cited scripture, Alma 41:10, also involves conduct and consequences; but in this scripture the emphasis is generally on negative consequences rather than ultimate reward. It has been cited in general conference by the First Presidency and the Twelve 37 times. Although this scripture is found in Alma's words teaching his son Corianton about the resurrection, overall the Brethren who have cited this verse in general conference have not done so to emphasize the resurrection, and they have not quoted the entire scripture. Only one, Elder Mark E. Peterson (1965),38 mentioned the warning that one won’t be “restored from sin to happiness.” The rest isolated the phrase “wickedness never was happiness” and applied it to a variety of topics ranging from pornography to marriage.

Two scriptures tied for sixth-most cited. In some ways comparable to Alma's advice to his son Corianton, Lehi spoke 2 Nephi 2:27 as advice to his sons concerning their conduct and its consequences. In this final counsel that he gave before his passing, Lehi emphasized the individual’s freedom to choose but warned of the source as well as the negative consequences of wrong choices. This scripture was cited in general conference 34 times by the prophets, seers, and revelators. This is a long verse containing many components of counsel. We found it quoted in its entirety only 6 times. We were interested by the number of times that citations of all kinds were in the context of Satan: his plan, his wickedness, his misery, and his threat to men: 19 of the 34.

Table: Book of Mormon Citations in General Conference, 1965–2014

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<tr>
<td>Brief allusion with at least partial quotation</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Being converted, being born again, enduring to the end, dispelling despair, sharing the gospel, feasting on words of Christ, consecrating, hoping for eternal things, pressing forward men and women together, being disciples, self-assessing, being valiant in testimony</td>
<td>A brief quotation or partial quotation, often with one or two sentences of comment, was the most common form of usage and most diversified. Frequently, this scripture was quoted or partially quoted as a conclusion or other form of climax for a talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Avoiding distraction by &quot;appendages,&quot; loving others despite differences, following the path of discipleship, recognizing Christ as the central figure of human history</td>
<td>These brief explanations give more depth and development for topics, extending their meanings and applications: (a) importance and difficulty of loving people of different cultures and beliefs, (b) what it does to be strong and how it will benefit you, (c) how Christ strengthens us and gives us peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Becoming true disciples</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Hoping for immortal things</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

"Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness."

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<tr>
<td>Indirect reference with &quot;see&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Marriage, personal purity, pornography, self-deceit</td>
<td>The passage was referenced indirectly to support warnings: “not even a little wickedness” (Hales, 1990),38 “don’t flirt with evil” (Scott, 2002).39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion with at least partial quotation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Chastity, moral conduct, self-respect, pornography, temptation, disobedience, evil and sin, spiritual pain, inability to rest or find peace</td>
<td>Brief, undeveloped allusions, by far the most common use, were generally applied to moral challenges, repentance, and loss of self-respect or peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Moral absolutes and law, specifics about Corianton as son, and Alma as advisor, desire of God for us to be happy, deceitfulness of appearances</td>
<td>Discussions dealt with deeper concepts (e.g., “sin creates disharmony with God”), more specific applications (story of young woman’s tragic experience), and more personal treatment (childhood error).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire talk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Return from error, consequences of sin, repentance, forgiveness, freedom from burdens through Christ</td>
<td>Elder Scott (2002)32 pleaded with the straying to return with a detailed account of a young man who rode the “crest of the wave of appetite and passion.” Effects of sin are part of God’s plan; repentance and the Savior free us from the burdens.</td>
</tr>
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The fifth-most cited scripture, Alma 41:10, also involves conduct and consequences; but in this scripture the emphasis is generally on negative consequences rather than ultimate reward. It has been cited in general conference by the First Presidency and the Twelve 37 times. Although this scripture is found in Alma’s words teaching his son Corianton about the resurrection, overall the Brethren who have cited this verse in general conference have not done so to emphasize the resurrection, and they have not quoted the entire scripture. Only one, Elder Mark E. Peterson (1965),38 mentioned the warning that one won’t be “restored from sin to happiness.” The rest isolated the phrase “wickedness never was happiness” and applied it to a variety of topics ranging from pornography to marriage.
“Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”

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<th>Nature of usage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect reference</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Satan's influence, Satan's misery, our discouragement, marriage alternatives, moment vs. eternity</td>
<td>Half of these references were in relation to Satan. The non-Satanic parenthetical references involved the perspective of the mortal journey and the freedom to choose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with “see”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Satan's activities, Christ's attributes, liberty, agency, accountability, law, family, trials, addictions</td>
<td>Seven of the thirteen related to Satan, including his plan and war, as well as the misery he wants to share with us. “Great mediator” was stressed as a role of Christ. Gifts of freedom and liberty were noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>The death of a loved one (personal example), plan of salvation/exaltation, choice of liberty, warning to women, trials, moral agency, sexual sin</td>
<td>Again, half of the citations dealt with Satan. The plan of salvation and its accompanying choices and blessings have their time of emphasis as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>God loves us and wants us to have joy; he gives us commandments and choices; we make our choices through our desires, thoughts, and actions</td>
<td>In “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord” (1988), President Benson gave a detailed contrast of God's and Satan's qualities, desires, relationships with us, and gifts to us. This climaxes his talk. This scripture in itself was not a dominant theme in any talk.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other scripture that tied for sixth place in citations by prophets, seers, and revelators is also related to conduct—one of the most positive examples of conduct portrayed in the Book of Mormon, one of the best known as well as most commonly cited in general conference. The verse portraying Nephi’s courageous obedience to the commandment to obtain the plates of Laban was described or alluded to in general conference sessions by these Brethren with 14 citations of 1 Nephi 3:7. Qualities and characteristics these Brethren discussed with citations to this scripture related most often to courage and obedience but also included trust, faith, prayerfulness, and commitment as well.

“...wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect reference</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Character of Laman and Lemuel, tithing, need to trust God and pray to know His will, education and vocation of single men</td>
<td>This scripture is often noted in parentheses for listeners and readers to associate with various applications of strength of character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with “see”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Obeying, having courage, going where the Lord calls, accepting call to apostleship (2 examples), responding to counsel, committing, serving, laboring</td>
<td>By far the most common use is as a quotation or partial quotation with a brief allusion comparing Nephi’s love for and trust in the Lord to whichever of a wide variety of topics was being developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Story of the call and struggle to obtain the plates; discussions of obedience, faith, prayer, spiritual direction, and seed of faith; importance of trusting and knowing God</td>
<td>Four of the discussions centered on the story, two of them comparing Nephi to Laman and Lemuel. Emulation was stressed: newly sustained Pres. Kimball’s faith was compared, as was the power of Heber J. Grant’s reading of the scripture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major theme or focus of talk</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1. Following the Lord's commandments 2. Putting ourselves in Nephi's place 3. Faith and divine guidance</td>
<td>1. Elder Perry (1973)45 retold details of the story along with details about Benjamin Franklin. 2. With a story retelling, Elder Perry 197946 urged the audience to make right decisions as Nephi did. 3. Elder Scott (1989)47 told the story in terms of the guidance Nephi received because of his faith and willingness to obey the Lord.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding eternal contexts. The final set of scriptures emphasized eternal contexts surrounding various aspects and blessings of the plan of salvation. Two scriptures tied for the next position in the sequence. The previous scripture was considered seventh in calculating sequence, although it was tied for sixth according to number of citations. The following two are tied
for the next position—thus they are both in eighth place in number, though calculated as eight and nine in the sequence.

The first of the scriptures that tied for eighth place, 2 Nephi 2:25, was quoted in general conference by the First Presidency and the Apostles 33 times. It was used in many different contexts; 14 of the 33 discussed the Creation and the Fall, some of them including the Atonement. Many focused only on the scripture’s final assertion, which is a form of context as it expresses God’s overall perspective—“men are that they might have joy”—relating this to a variety of topics and gospel principles. Sometimes both areas were included.

“Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy.”

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<tr>
<td>Indirect reference</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Acting for ourselves, keeping commandments, creating things, finding joy in the right, seeking true joy, exercising agency and self-reliance, maintaining chastity</td>
<td>These references were often made in relation to the Creation, Fall, and/or Atonement: that the fall was “a mortal creation” (Nelson, 1993). “that joy is part of God’s plan, and that “men are that they might have joy—not ‘will not’” (Nelson, 1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Creation/Fall, control of appetites, joy in celestial marriage and family sealing, standard of conduct, relationship of patience to joy</td>
<td>Six focus on the Creation and Fall, with two specifically on Eve (e.g., “that men [and women] might be,” Holland, 1997). Though typically only partial quotes are accompanied by a sentence or so (often only phrases), they involve a variety of topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Relationship to creation of physical body, answers to prayers, trust in the Lord, plan of happiness, joy/misery, joy in principles of the gospel</td>
<td>These present hows and whys with more depth and specificity: miracle of the physical body, ways trusting God brings joy, specifics on Eve’s act as a “glorious necessity” (Oaks 1993). LDS as a “joyful religion” (Uchtdorf, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Global economy, societal immorality, pickets and persecutions, wars, natural disasters, God with us</td>
<td>Elder Monson (2009) quoted the entire scripture in terms of discouraging problems in the world and trials in our individual lives. Listeners were assured that the Lord will always stand by us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the time we studied, the First Presidency and the Apostles also referred 33 times to Alma 42:8. This verse is part of the teachings of Alma to his son Corianton concerning the Fall—describing spiritual and temporal death and affirming that mortality is a time of probation and preparation. A number of prophets, seers, and revelators have cited this scripture in terms of the significance of the Fall and the necessity of physical death. Others have cited it with a focus on the phrase “great plan of happiness,” associated with a wide range of gospel principles and practices, ranging from prayer to celestial marriage, including admonitions to avoid fear and listen to the prophets.

“Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness.”

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<tr>
<td>Indirect reference</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Aging, Gospel restoration, agency to injure others, forever families, death, separation, thoughts, deeds, testing, mistakes, God’s law</td>
<td>References to the plan with these topics relate a sense of God’s purpose to the discussion of both negative and positive aspects of mortal existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Centrality of family/plague of pornography, Satan/children of God, world of misery/plan of happiness, standards/sin (topics joined here for illustration of contrasting applications, not combined in the talks)</td>
<td>All these contrasting factors come out in the allusions made in the talks. The effect is reassurance that the plan of salvation ultimately brings contrasting aspects of life together in meaningful relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Aging, death, gender identity, eternal marriage, resurrection, immortality, agency, probation, procreation, marriage, our return home</td>
<td>In 5 separate talks (1992–2013) Elder Nelson discussed processes of aging and temporal death, explaining they are necessary to fulfill the plan. Others also acknowledged the necessity of death, stressing the family unit that goes on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major theme or focus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1. Heavenly parents, Adam/Eve, transgression, joy, mortality, Atonement, eternal life 2. Premortal existence, council in heaven, Satan’s plan, our choice, Eve, transgression, our eternal destiny 3. Heavenly council, role of Lucifer, role of Adam and Eve, gender roles, motherhood</td>
<td>1. The plan answers major questions of life; it’s “beautiful in its simplicity” and influences “every aspect of our lives” (Ballard, 1995). 2. The plan’s ultimate purpose emerges in terms of its premortal and early mortal history and its emphasis on family (Oaks, 1993). 3. The emphasis is on doctrine and principles that cannot change; blessings and responsibilities can be eternal matters (Packer, 1993).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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To prepare themselves for the principles, the processes, and the blessings of the plan of happiness, children of God need to go beyond recognizing that they will not be happy in wickedness and that their ultimate destiny, according to the plan, will involve temptations, challenges, struggles, and eventually mortal death. They need to be instructed in ways to resist the temptations and challenges and deal effectively with the struggles, helping others to do so as well.

Two scriptures are tied for tenth place; they are similar in both context and injunction. Both involved a group of newly converted individuals experiencing an overwhelming change of heart as they converted and committed to be followers of Christ. Both experienced cleansing that prepared them for the eternal blessings of the plan of salvation. In quoting and citing these scriptures, the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles have taught their listeners of the changes and cleansing that they too must experience to receive the blessings of the plan of salvation.

In Mosiah 18:9 Alma explained to those requesting baptism two forms of commitment that might be perceived as themes of the scripture: to act with compassion (as they “mourn with those that mourn” and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort”) and to stand as a witness for Christ (“even until death”). The ultimate outcome is the redemption and eternal life promised in the great plan of happiness.

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.”

King Benjamin’s people underwent a transformation similar to that of Alma and his converts. In their renewed state they needed to avoid evil and repent and be cleansed of the damages it had done to them; the prophets, seers, and revelators have counseled in general conferences that doing these things requires an eternal perspective involving their disposition toward evil. The First Presidency and the Apostles have cited, quoted, or discussed Mosiah 5:2 during 30 conference talks between 1965 and 2014, with references by others bringing the total to 45. The assertion of King Benjamin’s people may become a goal for all of us.

“And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”

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<tr>
<td>Indirect reference</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Showing compassion, reflecting Christ’s example, sharing the gospel, testifying of Christ</td>
<td>These references support both the compassion and witness themes, with strong words like commandment, obligation, and “captained by Christ.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief allusion</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Map for eternal destination, healing, baptismal covenant, family life, pioneers, Church name, help for missionaries</td>
<td>The witness theme is used most often in the allusions: as a closing final encouraging comment by four speakers; to stress covenants, responsibilities, and eternal destinations by others.</td>
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References related to both needs for change and blessings following change. Many stressed it must be a “mighty change,” not an easy or a casual one.
Type | No. | Some topics covered | Nature of usage
--- | --- | --- | ---
Brief allusion | 8 | Mercy, God's love, personal understanding, charity, worldwide gospel culture, armor of God, gathering, conversion | These allusions tend to be associated with positive effects, especially in terms of experiencing God's love and the change that occurs with deepening love.

Brief discussion | 11 | Christlike qualities, conversion, covenants, spiritual rebirth, conference talks, Church welfare, intensity/effort, becoming | In talks that closed conferences, members were told to apply their learning to change. Several described the context of Benjamin's people. Rebirth was stressed.

Topic focus or prominent theme | 2 | 1. Benjamin's and Alma's people are described in terms of "mighty change." 2. Benjamin's people were cleansed from "taint and tyranny of sin." | 1. Elder Christofferson (2008) described both groups as "born again" and becoming "new creatures." 2. Elder Bednar (2007) described the "fundamental change" in their desires, motives, and nature.

Implications and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the number of times the Book of Mormon was cited in general conferences between 1965 and 2014. We looked at the number of citations in all conference addresses, but we were particularly interested in the frequency of Book of Mormon citations by prophets, seers, and revelators and in the contexts in which the verses were quoted and referenced. The results were consistent enough with the increased emphasis on scripture study in the Church curriculum and the availability of cross-referenced editions of the scriptures during the 1970s to suggest some cause-effect relationships. Additionally, the use of statistics and treatment of content vividly reflect the impact of President Benson’s focus throughout his presidency on the Book of Mormon as the keystone of the Latter-day Saint religion. He was a living example of his memorable sermons on studying, knowing, testifying of, and living the teachings. During and since his time as Church President, the leaders, especially the prophets, seers, and revelators, have cited the Book of Mormon to explain, clarify, and support a wide variety of teachings and testimonies.

Results of this study have implications for personal study as well as for learning and teaching in Church classes. President Benson said, “The Book of Mormon . . . was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us.”64 In “I Know Your Doing: The Book of Mormon Speaks to Our Times,” published in the Ensign, Richard Dilworth Rust confirmed, “The Book of Mormon fits our era of world history precisely, even though it refers to age-old events that happened in a foreign culture.”65 The Book of Mormon contains carefully selected sermons, letters, experiences, and prophecies inspired by the Lord to be preserved for our day. President Gordon B. Hinckley wrote, “In its descriptions of the problems of today’s society, [the Book of Mormon] is as current as the morning newspaper, and much more definitive.” Moroni wrote, “I speak unto you as if ye were present.” He and his father saw our greatest latter-day needs through revelation. Mormon affirmed, “I . . . write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord.”

Religious educators have the privilege and responsibility of helping learners make connections relating the Book of Mormon to their personal lives and to the world in which they live. Understanding the connections the Brethren have made may provide examples and motivation to guide learners in doing the same—enabling all of us to more fully appreciate the strength and magnitude of the keystone of the restored gospel.

Notes
1. See Book of Mormon, Introduction.


—. “To Be Free of Heavy Burdens,” 86–88.

Taking Mormon History into All the World

D. Brent Smith

The Mormon History Association (MHA) has sought, per its vision statement, to be "the preeminent catalyst worldwide for encouraging the scholarly study and appreciation of the Mormon past." In connection with the MHA's fiftieth anniversary and the 2015 MHA Conference in Provo, Utah, I surveyed the degree to which MHA, as well as other scholarly and even social media organizations that are engaged in the study and writing of Mormon history, have achieved a broad and integrated global focus. While much progress can be noted, I suggest that more should be attempted with regard to broader international participation and engagement. My suggestions reflect my own involvement in international Mormonism as well as my career focus on building international partnerships and engaging individuals from many nations in effective global undertakings.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, MHA president from 2014 to 2015, addressed members in her initial president's message, identifying her commitment "to help MHA move forward in new ways," one of which was expanding "engagement beyond conventional Mormon culture areas, and [creating] new ways of presenting and disseminating the best work in our field."
"It is time," she stated, "for MHA to internationalize our meetings and our scholarship. To do that we need your ideas, your scholarship, and yes, your financial support."2

Fifty years ago, when MHA was founded,3 the highly successful 1964–65 New York World’s Fair had just ended. At this fair, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints mounted a distinctive pavilion that attracted six million visitors. Besides the Mormon pavilion’s theme of “Man’s Search for Happiness,” outreach materials, prepared for distribution and subsequently translated into many languages, the pavilion declared the Latter-day Saint Church to be “A Church for All the World.”4 With over two million global members by 1965, the Church had an increasing international presence and a readiness to establish stakes and build temples in the world abroad. It was poised for a period of remarkable growth in developing countries—particularly in the Americas and the Philippines, and then in Africa following the 1978 priesthood revelation. As documented in a 2015 study which utilized 2011 statistics, 55 percent of the more than fourteen million Church members lived outside of the US and Canada, with 48 percent of all stakes located in international areas, compared to less than 3 percent of stakes fifty years ago.5

A Global Aspect to Mormon History from the Outset

From its beginnings, Mormonism was intended to be global, with its initial foray into the world in the 1840s. Indeed, Joseph Smith famously declared that “the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”6 Missionaries were initially dispatched to Canada, the British Isles, and the European continent, with Orson Hyde sent on to Palestine. By the 1850s, missionaries had been sent to open up work in Chile, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Hawaii, India, Italy, Malta, Scandinavia, South Africa, the South Pacific, and Switzerland, with further expansion in the 1870s to additional countries like Mexico. Missionary efforts were stepped up in the 1890s and saw further expansion in the early decades of the twentieth century to the Orient and South America, with broad expansion after World War II, except on the African Continent.7 Despite migrations to Utah and the Mountain West, Latter-day Saint converts retained a sufficient presence, particularly in Britain and the Northern European countries, to warrant the publication of Church-related international publications, such as the Millennial Star beginning in 1840 in England, and the launching of Scandinavian, German, and Dutch periodicals that continued local publication up until the late 1960s.8

Given the active involvement of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS)/Community of Christ historians in the Mormon History Association, I include a focus on the Community of Christ’s role in international Mormonism and, in particular, the activities of the related John Whitmer Historical Association (JWHA). From its outset, the Community of Christ likewise established a global presence, initially in Europe, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, and Australia, and also more recently in Africa and India.9

So, besides the history associated with the Restoration and, in the LDS case, the westward trek and establishment of a Great Basin kingdom, there has been a global aspect to Mormon history going back to the Nauvoo period and accelerating to the present day. The opening of distant areas to missionary work, with either migration to the United States or continued local development, has been variously chronicled in diaries, oral histories, and local records that the LDS Church History Department and its Community of Christ counterpart are gathering and cataloging, motivated to fulfill a scriptural charge to collect and preserve accounts and records.10 We have many fine biographies and historical accounts by MHA members that address the global and regional aspects of Mormon history as it has unfolded, and MHA sessions over the years have addressed these aspects.

Questions Regarding the Degree of International Involvement in Mormon History

Those who attended the 2014 MHA Conference in San Antonio witnessed the eloquent Tanner Lecture presentation by Professor Jehu Hanciles, professor of global Christianity at Emory University and a native of Sierra Leone.11 Addressing what he termed the impacts of “localization” and of “multidirectional transformation” on a twenty-first-century global Christianity that is increasingly non-Western, Professor Hanciles suggested that there seem to be limitations to Mormonism’s ability to adapt to these two developments that might call into question what he terms “doctrinal fidelity.” “But,” he continues, “faithfulness to core doctrine need not come at the expense of authentic representation or diversity of expression.”12
then caught the attention of MHA participants by pointing out the disparity between an increasingly global and multiracial LDS Church and the lack of non-US, non-Western, and non-white voices in the San Antonio MHA gathering. Audience comments and discussion at the Tanner Lecture confirmed that this was indeed a critically important issue for MHA, with then MHA president Richard E. Bennett noting, in closing the session, that the MHA Board had indeed given thought over the past year as to what could be done to achieve greater diversity and international participation within MHA. A posting about Professor Hanciles’s Tanner Lecture by Joseph Stuart, a Juvenile Instructor blogger, with follow-up comments by Saskia Tielens, among others, touched upon the issue and suggested the need for a “concrete plan [that] should be carried out to ensure that MHA not only thrives in the next fifty years, but has membership that reflects the racial diversity of Mormonism and those who are interested in Mormon history.”

Living in Germany for several years as a child, serving a LDS mission there, and then returning for graduate study, I gained an appreciation for the rich and unique German contributions to Mormon history, including the special situations of German Church members in both postwar Germanys that have been celebrated in moving accounts by President Thomas S. Monson and in oral histories collected by the Church History Department. Some years ago, a colleague and I wrote an extended memorandum focused on cross-cultural issues the Church was facing in Germany.

In the mid-1990s, as LDS stakes and local units throughout the world were considering how they might celebrate the 150th anniversary of the trek of the Mormon pioneers to Utah, I, together with Bruce Van Orden and Everett Smith, collected and published a collection of thirteen international LDS pioneering accounts, past and current; we selected the title Pioneers in Every Land. I am pleased to note that there has been a much greater effort within Mormondom to identify and celebrate pioneers wherever they are. “Pioneers in Every Land” is now a featured part of the Church History section on LDS.org, and it is the subtitle for featured Ensign and Liahona articles on the history of the Church in various countries, written by local Church history advisers. It was also the title of a 2015 Church History Library monthly series of ten lectures in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square.

In the emerging field of what is called Mormon studies, a distinction is often made between the “center”—or what I will call “hub”—and the “periphery.” In the LDS case, stakes and temples are now in most areas of the globe, and the blessings of the Internet bring general conference to the LDS global population. The hub remains paramount—in Salt Lake City for the Latter-day Saints and in Independence for the Community of Christ—but with increasing focus on the periphery. In the LDS case, there have been some back-and-forth developments. Locally developed Church magazines were consolidated in the late 1960s with termination of the Millennial Star in the UK as well as other local European LDS publications, in connection with the publication of the Ensign magazine and its companion, the Liahona, which is published in other languages. At that period of time, it was standard practice for Ensign or Church News staff specialists to go out into the world and write what Melissa Inouye has termed “fill-in-the-blank” feature articles about the opening of missionary work, expansion, challenges, and current status of the Church in countries of the world. With renewed focus on the periphery, a series of Church area conferences were held over the course of several years, beginning in 1971. Area Presidencies were established in 1984 with Area Offices also set up. In the Community of Christ case, apostles have been assigned to each of the church’s global regions. For many years now, leaders from the periphery have been called to the governing councils of both the LDS Church and the Community of Christ. Within the last couple of years, we have seen additional recognition of the importance of the periphery in the February 2014 creation of a truly international LDS Young Women’s General Board (women from Brazil, Peru, Japan, South Africa, and New York City, in addition to four from Utah) and the practice, beginning with the October 2014 LDS general conference, of having non-English speakers give addresses in their native tongues.

At the 2012 Calgary MHA, the LDS Church History Department reported on its initiative, in early 2010, of a process to decentralize the collection by preserving and sharing Church history with local areas, coupled with the calling of now more than 220 area, country, and regional Church history advisers to conduct this work under the direction of Area Presidencies. These Church history advisers are certainly in a position to incorporate elements of the diversity sought by Professor Hanciles in the histories they gather and share. The 2015 MHA Conference included two panels comprised of such Church history advisers and specialists from global regions and countries who participated on-site at the 2015 MHA.
International Engagement in Mormon History–Related Organizations

Noting this positive evidence of a greater international focus in these recent developments within the LDS Church and Community of Christ (particularly the decentralization of LDS Church History Department activities), I now turn to my review of how MHA, JWHA, and a number of other organizations and groups are engaging in the study of Mormon history internationally.

The South German Mission Foundation, with support from former South German missionaries and others, obtained donations and arranged for the translation of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* into German for placement on the Internet. And since 2011, Ulrich Rueckauer, Church history adviser for Germany, Austria, and German-speaking Switzerland, has authored some 200 issues of a newsletter, *Kirchengeschichte im deutschen Sprachraum*, that he distributes to over 700 recipients online with likely much broader distribution through electronic sharing and often placement on meetinghouse bulletin boards. He is in the process of collecting oral histories and developing a blog. He initiated contact to propose collaboration with counterpart LDS history advisers in other European countries, but so far there has not been much interest in explicit cooperation.

Melissa Inouye and others launched an International Mormon Studies Book Project, also obtaining Church History Department approval to provide complete sets of Joseph Smith Papers volumes. The cost of shipping books to universities has, according to Inouye, proven to be so great that other alternatives are being explored, such as paying for library online access to digital acquisitions. Initial shipments were sent to the Institut Francais pour la Recherche sur le Mormonisme at the University of Bordeaux, France, and the University of Queensland in Australia. Inouye reports that one intended recipient of a set of *Joseph Smith Papers* volumes, a university in New Zealand, turned it down when they found out it was coming from the Mormons.

Mormon studies associations have also been organized in Europe and in Brazil. In addition, there is a Mormon Pacific Historical Society. The European Mormon Studies Association (EMSA) is, according to its constitution, “a scholarly organization that supports the academic study of the Mormon experience in Europe and Mormonism in general by Europeans.” It holds meetings in Europe at a time and place selected by its executive board. The association sponsors an online journal, the *International Journal of Mormon Studies*, with David M. Morris as publisher and editor. The intent has been to publish one volume a year filled with scholarly articles as well as book reviews. Volume 1 appeared in 2008; Volume 6, dated 2013, is the most recent online version. In accessing its website, I noted that the most recent EMSA conference was held 13–14 December 2013, in connection with the BYU London Centre. EMSA was founded in 2006 and held its previous conferences in Worcester, UK (2007); Turku, Finland (2008); Torino, Italy (2009); Tilburg, Netherlands (2010); and University of Durham, UK (2011). A cursory review of conference programs and journal volumes shows that participation has come from both European and US scholars of Mormon studies.

The Brazilian Association for Mormon Studies (ABEM) holds annual Brazilian Mormon studies conferences. The initial ABEM conference was held 23 January 2010, in São Paulo. ABEM has a blog titled *Vozes Mórmons*.

The Mormon Pacific Historical Society engages in research on LDS Church history in the Pacific Basin area and holds annual educational conferences and workshops, teaching historical gathering and recording skills. It met in October 2015 in Hawaii.

A “Global Crossroads: Mormonism and Asia in the Twenty-First Century” conference was hosted on 22 March 2014 at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. Organized by Elizabeth Heath and Brittany Chapman of the LDS Church History Department, it featured Melissa Inouye, Laurie Maffly-Kipp, and Joanna Brooks, among others. A video of the proceedings was recorded for online viewing.

The Mormon Scholars Foundation, sponsor of the summer seminars that either Richard Bushman or Terryl Givens has led for several summers, has been a key catalyst in the development and mentoring of young scholars, many of whom are making solid contributions in the field of Mormon history and participating in MHA. With their focus on fostering long-term, peer-to-peer and mentor-to-peer relationships, Bushman and Givens have set their sights on including non-US participants in the summer seminars and in developing and maintaining connections with international colleagues. Givens, for instance, was on the dissertation committee of Mauro Properzi, an Italian scholar who studied at the University of Durham in Mormon Studies and now teaches at BYU. He reports that there have been a “sprinkling” of European participants in the summer seminar over past years, some of whom were instrumental in helping form the European Mormon Studies
Association. He expected that the 2015 summer seminar would include participants from Holland, Italy, and Scotland.29

The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship has, according to its public communications specialist, Blair Hodges, “not yet made it a main priority to facilitate greater international outreach or connection in Mormon studies.” It works with international scholars in its Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, but finds with respect to Mormon studies that “the field is still rather U.S.-centric.” In its 2015 volume, the newly “rebooted” Mormon Studies Review features a roundtable of “scholars writing on the topic of Lived Mormonism with attention directly paid to the international scene.” Melissa Inouye has been added as a Mormon Studies Review associate editor and, according to Hodges, she has some ideas of how to increase international involvement not just in the journal but in research efforts more generally.30

Certainly, the development and increasing number of Mormon-related blogs have led to increased exposure and discussion of Mormon history topics and issues, providing potential opportunities for engagement of non-US participants. In my quick survey of listings of authors and contributors of several of these blogs, I was able to identify only a few, mostly European, non-US bloggers. In correspondence with Christopher Jones, he has identified two non-US bloggers who blog with him at Juvenile Instructor, as well as other young international scholars, some of whom are non-Mormons, who blog elsewhere or are actively engaged in Mormon studies.31

All of these developments are encouraging in terms of expanding the international focus among specialists in Mormon history, particularly the development of regional associations. Let’s now turn to developments with respect to the two Mormon history associations: first, the Community of Christ–oriented John Whitmer Historical Association (JWHA), and second, the MHA.

JWHA, as surveyed, has eleven non-US members who receive its journal and newsletter, six of whom are Canadian, with one each from Australia, India, Italy, Japan, and Switzerland. Four Canadians attended its 2013 annual meeting, and three attended the 2014 meeting. Queried as to whether JWHA leadership has made plans or discussed the possibility of global outreach efforts like regional (outside the US) meetings, webinars, or forms of distance participation for those who can’t travel to annual meetings, the JWHA executive director responded that no specific discussions have yet taken place.32

Focusing now on MHA, it has, as already noted, included papers on international Mormon history topics in its conferences over the years, most of which have been presented by American MHA regulars. Think of the wealth of expertise with respect to Mormon history in specific regions and countries among current historians who have had on-the-ground experience and key contacts in specific geographical areas. Think, for instance, of Mark Grover and LaMond Tullis with respect to Brazil and Mexico, and Kahlile Mehr with respect to Eastern Europe. MHA has met on four occasions outside of the United States, working with local organizing committees to
organize meetings in Oxford, UK, in 1987; in Kingston, Canada, in 1995; in Aralbog and Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2000; and in Calgary, Canada, in 2012. With the early 2015 resignation of MHA's executive directors, I was unable, in preparation for my 2015 MHA presentation, to obtain figures with regard to non-US MHA membership and non-US Journal of Mormon History subscriptions. Though MHA's historian, Jeffery Johnson, did not have a breakdown of non-US and US participants for the two European conferences, it is significant, according to his figures, that MHA attendance actually increased at its 1987 conference in the UK to 762 participants, as compared to 642 attendees the year before in Salt Lake, and 720 the year after in Logan. Some 624 participants were at the 2000 conference in Denmark, compared to 678 the year before in Ogden, and 823 the year after in Cedar City.\(^3\) The MHA includes specific Best International Article or Best International Book awards in its bestowal of annual awards. It is indeed significant that the 2015 Leonard J. Arrington Award was bestowed on Néstor Curbelo, the LDS South American South Area history adviser, who has written histories of the Church in Argentina, his native Uruguay, and other South American countries.

Increasing its focus on international Mormon history and non-US participation at its conferences, in connection with the “preeminent catalyst worldwide” clause in the MHA mission statement, has indeed been a topic of emphasis in MHA Board discussions as evidenced in the invitation to Jehu Hanciles to present the 2014 Tanner Lecture. The fruits of this focus are evident in the fact, as reported by MHA membership chair Barbara Brown, that more than thirty historians from outside the US planned to come to the 2015 MHA, with the 2015 program “showing perhaps the widest diversity of cultures ever represented at MHA.”\(^3\) This was indeed a remarkable achievement. It remains to be seen if this level of international participation can be sustained in future MHA conferences.

The combination of travel, lodging, and registration expenses makes participation in MHA as well as JWHA conferences expensive for many non-North American attendees, particularly those from developing countries. The fact that English is the established and expected language for these conferences is also challenging for non-English speakers. An increasing percentage of individuals, particularly in developed countries, do have some working knowledge of English, and in the case of those associated with both churches, also have a motivation to connect with English source material. Christopher Jones notes that “the few international scholars working in Mormon studies are a predominantly English-speaking bunch. Very, very few are involved from Latin America, Asia and other non-English speaking parts of the globe.”\(^3\)

Noting the generally positive, though somewhat limited, developments in the organizations I surveyed for this paper, let me suggest there are yet many more challenges to address, notably the need for MHA and other Mormon history-related activities to connect to more non-Western and racially diverse participants, as suggested by Professor Hanciles—at least reflecting the diverse memberships of the Latter-day Saint and Community of Christ churches. Certainly the LDS Church History Department is encountering and dealing with this challenge in identifying and working with its Church history advisers in the many developing countries within the global LDS population.

**Potentially Applicable Models for International Outreach and Participation**

Focused efforts in today’s world to broaden international outreach as well as major advances in communications technology are having a key impact in enabling enhanced participation, spurring international partnerships, and effectively including individuals from many nations (and particularly developing countries) in ongoing and new international efforts. I share my experience in two such efforts with the intent of demonstrating how they might be directly applicable to MHA, JWHA, the Mormon Scholars Foundation, and the blogs and other activities I surveyed that would benefit from a more diverse and international approach in their focus on Mormon history.

I have worked in international affairs for the Satellite and Information Service of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and participated on a frequent basis in Internet web conferencing with counterparts in other organizations, including many from developing countries. A working group I served on organized the November 2015 annual ministerial meeting of a ninety-seven-nation environmental organization that was hosted in Mexico. Bridging many time zones, our working group met virtually at least monthly through a GoToMeeting web conference, after having gotten together for an initial three- to four-day meeting in January 2015 that, of course, required travel on our part. We collaborated via email and subgroup web conferences, finalizing our documents and other products with the larger group in our monthly web conference. We interacted through
discussion, recognizing each other’s faces via the webcams, in this way and through email, building the personal relationships that are so important to collaboration.

In another situation, I cochaired the environmental subcommittee of an international federation dealing with space and related applications: NASA and NOAA are the US member agencies involved along with many foreign space agencies and space industrial organizations. All members are assessed prorated annual fees; all individuals involved also pay registration fees for the annual congress. Young professionals (up to age 35) and students pay reduced fees, with several receiving stipends from various sources to cover transportation and lodging. The United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs and certain space agencies provide funds to cover travel, lodging, and registration stipends for a number of attendees from developing countries who participate in a special three-day workshop that precedes the annual congress and then stay on for the congress itself. Officers in the federation as well as various space organization leaders make workshop presentations and interact with the participants from developing countries. Similarly, they connect with both young professionals and students in special seminar panels and networking activities that the congress arranges for both these groups—essentially providing a mentoring role. Participants in the developing-country workshop, the young professionals, and students are encouraged to propose and present a paper in a congress technical session. As you might imagine, those who participate in this special manner are highly motivated to participate in the federation and its congresses and to pursue professional opportunities in space-related fields. They benefit from long-term contact with those who mentor them.

The young professionals and students, with the superior IT skills their generation possesses, have added a new dimension to the activities of the congress and the federation itself. As a pilot activity, the young professionals convinced congress officials to allow the addition of a few virtual forums on key topics of interest so that certain congress sessions could be broadcast worldwide as webinars. They are set up through advance registration to include young professionals who could not attend the congress. The federation’s young professionals, in coordination with a federation officer, have sponsored additional webinars throughout the year. Using webcams, participants connect via local, toll-free numbers or use Skype or VOIP. Presentations and charts can be displayed. Such events can be videotaped and made available via YouTube or an organizational website. Donor organizations initially covered the GoToMeeting webinar access costs for the young professionals organization (on the order of a few hundred dollars per year), but the federation has now agreed to cover the annual costs.

English is the working language of both the Environmental Plenary and the Space Congress, which is an initial challenge for those with limited English proficiency. This challenge is largely overcome through their sustained involvement. In both of the organizations I identified, there has been successful integration: new nations and new participants (notably those from developing countries) in the case of the environmental organization and young professionals and students in the case of the space federation. Key features of this enhanced integration are the use of web conferencing to enable more frequent collaborative interactions, outreach efforts through webinar technology to attract and maintain contact with participants, provision of donor support and reductions in participation fees that attract new entrants, and the willingness of experienced nations and individuals to welcome and actively mentor newcomers to the organization.

Specific Suggestions to Broaden Mormon History Outreach and Participation

The international collaboration examples I have cited are directly applicable to spur the somewhat underdeveloped international outreach efforts currently found in MHA, JWHA, and some of the other surveyed organizations. With respect to web-based technology, the LDS Church has embraced the Internet age, making the commitment and investment to be able to provide global coverage of its general conferences as well as video transcripts. The Church History Department employs web-based technology in its training of Church history advisers.

Video transcripts of the 6–7 March 2014 BYU Church History Symposium on “The Worldwide Church: The Global Reach of Mormonism,” featuring keynote addresses by Terryl Givens and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, are accessible online, and a selection of symposium proceedings was published by the BYU Religious Studies Center in 2016. The BYU Management Society organized a free webinar in February 2015 with some 340 participants from around the world. The technology is available to be utilized. I suggest that the two Mormon history associations, the Mormon Scholars Foundation, and other organizations consider the webinar approach
in organizing participatory Mormon history activities to benefit global audiences.

Holding future MHA and JWHA meetings at non-US sites are admittedly challenging decisions for their respective boards, but it is a decision that MHA has already taken on four occasions. In today’s world, there are at least three interim options that might be considered as a decided way forward to enhance international outreach and participation: (1) organizing adjunct or splinter MHA and JWHA sessions or other joint activities to coincide with conferences of other organizations, such as the European, Brazilian, or Pacific Historical organizations; (2) examining prospects for distance participation in MHA or JWHA meeting sessions via streaming video or webinar technology (here the issue of registration fees might have to be addressed); and (3) employing distance participation technology to link a US-located MHA or JWHA conference with an MHA- or JWHA-organized conference segment—a lecture or special session—at a foreign location, one that might, for example, be celebrating a Mormon history-related anniversary or might be able to attract a sizable local participation. A well-known example of this option was the staging of a linked session of the April 1980 LDS general conference from Fayette, New York, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the organization of the Church.

Furthering the collection and placement of Mormon history materials—probably in digital format—should be encouraged. It will be a challenge to capture and share the wealth of material that is coming forward and to provide translations, as necessary. The Joseph Smith Papers project in Spring 2015 produced material for non-English-speaking audiences, translating and releasing all four of the Joseph Smith First Vision accounts in ten languages. Mormon-related blogs could, of course, be at the forefront in expanding outreach and participation opportunities with respect to Mormon history. An untapped resource would seem to be the reservoir of returned missionaries with foreign living and language experience who, similar to what the South German Mission Foundation has accomplished, might step up to address the need to help organize and provide source materials and better integrative opportunities for those on the periphery; Russia is an area that might particularly benefit from such focus at the present time.

The mentoring efforts of the Mormon Scholars Foundation deserve special mention. Besides the provision of donor funds to enable participation in seminars and conferences, it is above all the attention and engagement of mentors like Richard Bushman and Terryl Givens that help motivate and shape lifelong professional commitments, as is seen in the cadre of graduates of their summer seminars and the impact they are having in MHA and in religious studies venues. This type of mentoring needs to be extended to individual participants from the developing areas on the periphery of Mormondom to foster their engagement in Mormon history. Those of us conversant with Mormon history need to step up to serve as “nursing fathers and nursing mothers” (as in 2 Nephi 10:9) in encouraging the development of those who have contributions yet to be made in this field. Reaffirming the words of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, to internationalize MHA and Mormon history, our ideas, our scholarship, and yes, our financial support, are all needed.

Taking the study of Mormon history into all the world is a work in progress. Broader involvement of international participants engaged in the making of this history is imperative. Communication advances and social media tools should be utilized. Those who heard Professor Hanciles’s eloquent presentation at the 2014 San Antonio MHA Conference understood that we need to do more. What will the next fifty years bring? Hopefully, a more globally inclusive Mormon history that lives up to Joseph Smith’s vision of penetrating every continent, visiting every clime, sweeping every country, and sounding in every ear.

Notes

1. The complete text of the MHA vision statement is as follows: “The Mormon History Association seeks to be the preeminent worldwide catalyst for encouraging the scholarly study and appreciation of the Mormon past.” This vision statement was originally accessed on the MHA website but is no longer included on the newly-revised MHA website. It was often cited in previous programs of annual MHA conferences, for example on page 5 of the program of the 16–29 May 2011 MHA St. George, Utah, conference. The MHA mission statement, the text of which is now subsumed in the first paragraph of the “About Us” section of the new MHA website, states in its second sentence: “We welcome all who are interested in the Mormon past, irrespective of religious affiliation, academic training or world location.”
2. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “President’s Message,” MHA Newsletter 49, no. 3 (Summer 2014).
3. MHA was founded in December 1965 under the leadership of Leonard Arrington, off-line at the American Historical Association meeting in San Francisco.

6. This language from Joseph Smith is part of a longer paragraph relating to the growth of “the work” that is included in the so-called Wentworth Letter immediately prior to the text that has come to be known as the thirteen Articles of Faith, all of which was published under the title “Church History” in the 1 March 1842 edition of the Nauvoo newspaper, Times and Seasons. The quoted text is included in Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., Histories, Volume 1, Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844, vol. 1 of the Histories series of The Joseph Smith Papers, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 500.


9. Plewe, Brown, Cannon, and Jackson, Mapping Mormonism, also documents periods of Community of Christ international growth.

10. There are many charges to gather and preserve historical records in Restoration scriptures: the plates of Laban, the large and small plates of Nephi, and the Jaredite records in the Book of Mormon, and the direction, for example, in Doctrine and Covenants 69:3 for “writing and making a history,” and in verse 5, that “my servants who are abroad in the earth should send forth the accounts of their stewardships to the land of Zion.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints collects annual histories from each of its stakes and has its Church history advisers conduct oral history interviews that are centrally collected in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City or in an increasing number of international records-preservation centers. The Community of Christ likewise collects and preserves historical records.


12. Hanciles, “Would That All God’s People Were Prophets,” 57–58. Following this logic, and a premise that would require further examination, Mormonism should be able to adapt to and respect diverse cultures without compromising its basic doctrine.

13. Joseph Stuart, “A More Diverse Mormon History Association, or How the 2014 Tanner Lecture Has Haunted Me Since June,” Juvenile Instructor (blog), 15 September 2014, http://juvenileinstructor.org/thoughts-on-growing-a-more-diverse-mormon-history-association-or-how-the-2014-tanner-lecture-has-haunted-me-since-june/. He and Saskia Tielens have been actively involved in Mormon history activities; Stuart is a graduate student and Tielens is a non–Latter-day Saint scholar and was educated in the Netherlands and Germany.


21. The translation has been an ongoing project for the South German Mission Foundation for several years. The completion of the translation into German and electronic publishing of the entire Encyclopedia of Mormonism was announced in South German Mission Foundation’s newsletter The New Key 8 (March 2010): 1.


23. Melissa Inouye, email messages with author, 29, 30, and 31 March 2015.


29. Terryl Givens, email messages with author, 13 and 14 April 2015.


31. Christopher Jones, email messages with author, 21 and 22 April 2015.

32. Cherylle Grinter, email message with author, 21 and 30 April 2015.


34. Barbara Jones Brown, email messages with author, 1 and 3 May 2015.

35. Christopher Jones, email messages with author, 21 and 22 April 2015.

In the history of the Church,” President Boyd K. Packer taught, “there is no better illustration of the prophetic preparation of this people than the beginnings of the seminary and institute program. These programs were started when they were nice but were not critically needed. They were granted a season to flourish and to grow into a bulwark for the Church. They now become a godsend for the salvation of modern Israel.” Seeking to chronicle this history, the recent volume, By Study and Also by Faith: One Hundred Years of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, captures the system’s rise from a humble beginning of seventy students in 1912 to become a worldwide organization that provides religious education to over 700,000 students a year.

In the volume’s forward, Elder Paul V. Johnson, former Commissioner of the Church Educational System, outlines the book’s purpose: “We were in danger of losing a great deal of knowledge of our history. Some other organizations cut their connections to their roots and begin to drift. This organization could not afford this,” he warned. “Our history doesn’t limit us, but like a plant’s roots it anchors and nourishes us and is crucial for growth. Our history helps us grasp our identity and protects us” (viii).
The prologue adeptly overviews the foundation of education in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Drawing from the words of modern revelation and the practices of the early Saints, it outlines the groundwork laid for Seminaries and Institutes by educational endeavors in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Utah. Importantly, the prologue connects the Church’s earlier academies and religion classes to the modern Church Educational System, helping the reader recognize that the seminary and institute programs were the continuation of larger efforts to nurture faith in the hearts of youth and young adults. While some readers might wish this and later parts of the book were strengthened by a discussion of religious instruction beyond Mormonism or a deeper examination of the alternatives to released-time religious education, the prologue nicely places the formation of the seminary and institute system within a larger Church context.

Following the prologue, the book focuses its remaining nearly six hundred pages specifically on the history of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. In chapters that are as long as one hundred pages each, the book details the operations of programs that grew beyond their Wasatch Front beginnings to their current reach around the world.

The authors, who, it appears from the acknowledgments, all have backgrounds in Church education, seem to grapple with a challenge faced by every teacher: too much material to cover and a reluctance to leave anything out. As one who has tried to talk more quickly in a class in order to teach more material, I resonate with the difficulty, or even the reluctance, they faced to “reduce and simplify.” However, the words of Elder Packer quoted earlier regarding the history of the program might apply to the volume specifically. From a reader’s perspective, some of the information the book contains is “nice but . . . not critically needed.” For example, a general readership likely does not need details of the Alpine summer school from 1927 and 1928 (48–50), a listing of extracurricular activities by teachers and students in the 1930s (62), the development of choirs at the Logan and Salt Lake City institutes in the 1940s and 50s (111), a reference to William E. Berrett constructing a coffin for his deceased child (141), or the listing of computer reporting programs in the 1990s (418–19). The challenge of too much detail is especially evident in the latter half of the volume, where the authors write about events that they and some of their readers personally experienced. Of course, this difficulty is faced by anyone who attempts to write in an historical way about events of the recent past involving living subjects. The challenge increases when the writing is done by committee. Though the volume is well researched and seeks to be exhaustive, some of its information might better be placed in a footnote or in a separate collection altogether.

Admittedly, the book maintains its detailed focus on the seminary and institute systems. Therefore, beyond the prologue, which touches on other Church education endeavors that were foundational to the programs in question, the bulk of the book makes little mention of related religious education programs like those at BYU, BYU–Idaho, and BYU–Hawaii. To the authors’ credit, when the other Church universities are mentioned, it is always in the context of their connection to the history of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. This is the case with the discussion of BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson, as his role as chancellor of the Unified Church School System is emphasized, and with the overview of BYU–Idaho’s Pathways Program, as the book draws connections to the larger Institute of Religion system.

As an institutional history, the book is heavily organized around people. This may be appropriate because teaching is, first and foremost, a people-oriented profession. From the beginning of each chapter, which, with the exception of the prologue, starts with a full-page picture of a person central to the story (Thomas J. Yates, first seminary teacher; President Henry B. Eyring, Granite High School Seminary Building, first LDS seminary building, ca. 1912.
two-time commissioner of the Church Educational System; Stanley A. Peterson, associate commissioner/administrator of religious education and Church schools; and so forth), to appendix 7, which contains twenty-three pages of administrator biographies, the book is people-dominated. Page after page contains interesting pictures of people important to the history. Even when the expansion of the program internationally is discussed, it is in conjunction with people. For example, when the first international programs are examined, they are introduced with headings that include both a location and a person: Great Britain—John M. Madsen, Australia—J. L. Jaussi, and New Zealand—Rhett James (184–91). This pattern of discussing a building, program, or country in conjunction with people important to the story is consistent throughout the text.

The focus on people comes at a cost, however—one that Elder Johnson acknowledges in his foreword. “Despite this volume’s relatively large size, it cannot be comprehensive. There are too many people, too many powerful accounts, and too many miracles and blessings to squeeze into one volume” (ix). Therefore, the emphasis on certain people, most often those with connections to central administration, exacerbates a challenge, especially for a program that is no longer limited to the Wasatch Front. The problem of selectivity is especially evident in the aforementioned appendix of administrator biographies, as the book does not clearly identify the criteria used for determining inclusion. With more than 3,000 current employees and over 44,000 volunteers worldwide, prominent people are going to be missed, even in a book of over six hundred pages. For example, Joseph M. Tanner is only mentioned in a passing sentence as a bridge between Karl G. Maeser and Horace H. Cummings, though Tanner served as superintendent of Church schools for five pivotal years (25). Additionally, a personal introduction in the text to nearly every central-office administrator, coupled with detailed biographies of these leaders in an appendix, subtly brands the book as an institutional production, though system-wide non-administrators and volunteers outnumber full-time administrators dramatically. Therefore, thousands of current and former full-time employees and volunteers who dedicated many years to the work of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion may feel their history was neglected. While the book will resonate with those who know and love the leadership of the Seminary and Institute systems, much remains to be written from the perspectives of women (443–47), students (453–56), and volunteers (456–59). In fact, institutionally, as many pages are dedicated to employment practices including compensation and contracts (541–44) as are specifically dedicated to the voices of women, students, and volunteers. Furthermore, perspectives from non-English-speaking areas of the world are limited.

These observations are not intended to be criticisms of what is a remarkable product. In fact, President Packer’s observation that the program had become “a godsend for the salvation of modern Israel” is also evident in the history. The tone of the volume is admittedly and unapologetically positive, as a volume dealing with this topic and published by the Church should be. “The history of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion is one of faith, sacrifice, and devotion,” writes Chad H. Webb, administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. “It is a history of commitment to and love for our Father in Heaven and His Son Jesus Christ. It is a history of love for the sacred word of God, of love for youth and young adults and of lives dedicated to teaching, lifting, preparing, and protecting them” (xi–xii).

While the book outlines challenges faced by Seminaries and Institutes of Religion over time, it openly asserts that God’s hand coupled with the sacrifice of loyal employees advanced the program. For example, describing the challenges faced in expanding beyond Mormonism’s traditional intermountain region, the book concludes, “As in Church education’s infant days, the right leaders and teachers came forward to overcome each obstacle” (93). This volume ascribes to the perspective voiced by President Joseph F. Smith: “The hand of the Lord may not be visible to all. There may be many who cannot discern the workings of God’s will in the progress and development of this great latter-day work, but there are those who see in every hour and in every moment of the existence of the Church, from its beginning until now, the overruling, almighty hand of Him who sent His Only Begotten Son.” While not flawless, By Study and Also by Faith succeeds in chronicling the divine hand in the history of Seminaries and Institutes.

Notes

2. For example, additional detail could be added to clarify Elder David O. McKay’s initial opposition to the seminary program (41).
3. These voices do emerge occasionally in other portions of the book, but not as separate sections.
Recent Publications

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Joseph Smith's Seer Stones
By Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick

This book discusses the origins of Joseph Smith's seer stones and explores how Joseph used them throughout his life in a way that goes beyond translating the Book of Mormon. It also traces the provenance of the seer stones once they leave his possession.

The authors also examine how the Book of Mormon itself provides a storyline about the history of seer stones, which also helped Joseph Smith learn about his own prophetic gifts. Finally, this book explores how Joseph Smith took his own experiences with seer stones and created a theology of seer stones that became closely linked with his unique doctrines of exaltation.


Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes
Edited by Craig James Ostler, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Barbara E. Morgan

This book is a compilation of essays from the 45th annual Brigham Young University Sydney B. Sperry Symposium titled The Foundations of the Restoration. The keynote address by Robert L. Millet highlights the restoration of plain and precious truths. Readers will learn how we understand LDS history and doctrine, about the beliefs declared in the Articles of Faith and how we apply their truths, about the development of temples and temple ordinances, and about the restoration of true Sabbath worship. Also included are chapters on Church newspaper editor and hymn writer William W. Phelps's contributions to our understanding of the restoration of the gospel; the historical development of sustaining members of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve as prophets, seers, and revelators; and the harmony and counsel needed in their declaring doctrine and making administrative decisions.


A Reason for Faith: Navigating LDS Doctrine & Church History
Edited by Laura Harris Hales

A Reason for Faith was written to do just as the title implies: provide reasons for faith by offering faithful answers to sincere questions. Before the Internet, historical and doctrinal questions not addressed in the curriculum of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were mostly found in the scholarly articles of academic journals. This is no longer the case. These topics are now widely debated and discussed online and in other forums. And when members of the LDS Church come across information that is unfamiliar, they may feel surprise, fear, betrayal, or even anger.

Upcoming Events

Sidney B. Sperry Symposium
Friday and Saturday, 28–29 October 2016
The 45th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium will be held in the Joseph Smith (JSB) auditorium on BYU campus. The theme is "Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes." Presentations will cover the Savior’s restoration of foundational truths, doctrines, and covenants.

Religious Education Student Symposium
Friday, 17 February 2017
This event will be held in the Wilkinson Student Center from 9:00 to noon. The annual student symposium provides a forum for students to research, write, and present papers about religious subjects from a faithful perspective. For more information, visit http://rsc.byu.edu/studentsymposium.

These events are free of charge, and registration is not required. Some event details are subject to change. For more details, please visit us online at rsc.byu.edu/conferences or contact Brent Nordgren at 801-422-3293.

Staff Spotlights

Student Editor
Born and raised in a suburb just south of Denver, Tyler is a proud Coloradan. He is currently studying history with minors in editing and business management at BYU and loves working as an editing intern at the RSC. He finds Church history fascinating and believes in the importance of the RSC’s mission—publishing groundbreaking works on Church scripture, doctrine, history, and culture. His favorite hobbies include camping, hiking, traveling, reading history books, playing his harmonica, participating in deep discussions around campfires, and spending time with his wife, Katelyn.

Student Editor
Jessica Neilson is a senior majoring in English language and minoring in editing. She has grown up in the same house in Bluffdale, Utah, for her whole life; in fact, her first time moving was to attend Utah State University after graduating from high school. After two rewarding years going to school in Logan, she transferred to BYU, where she has loved the rigorous coursework, gospel-centered environment, and inspiring peers and mentors around her. Jessica relishes reading and playing sports, particularly basketball and volleyball. She enjoys working as an editing intern for the Religious Studies Center, where she appreciates the gospel knowledge she is able to gain and the uplifting atmosphere in which she can work.

Student Media Specialist
Angela Lee has always had a passion for communications and media. She was raised in a multicultural household, which prepared her with the bilingual skills necessary to adapt when her family moved to Guadalajara, Mexico, for a few years; however, she is proud to call Mesa, Arizona, home. Currently she is a senior at Brigham Young University majoring in public relations; she plans to graduate in the spring of 2017. After graduation she hopes to study different cultures and their communication tactics. Angela has loved working with the RSC because of the amazing content she gets to work with and the educational and spiritual effect it has on her.
The Religious Educator serves the needs and interests of those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ on a regular basis. The distinct focuses are on teaching the gospel; publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing outstanding devotional essays. The beliefs of the respective authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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3. Does the manuscript present significant new data or new perspectives? What is its main contribution? Will people want to read this ten years from now? Does it make a contribution without resorting to sensationalism or controversy?

4. Does the author follow the canons of responsible scholarship (uses sound and fair methodology; documents arguable facts)? If not, why?

5. Is the manuscript faith-promoting? Is the piece in harmony with the established doctrine of the Church?

If a manuscript is accepted, authors will be notified and asked to provide photocopies of all source materials cited, arranged in order, numbered to match the endnotes, and highlighted to show the quotations or paraphrases. Photocopies of source material must include title page and source page with the highlighted quotations.

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