

Teachings of Harold B. Lee

by Harold B. Lee

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After only 18 months as Church President, Harold B. Lee died on December 26, 1973, in Salt Lake City

Chapter Nineteen

Teaching and Church Doctrine

Church Doctrine

*The **teaching** of the **doctrines** needs to be kept pure and simple.* We face a tremendous task **in** our time **in** **maintaining** doctrinal purity **in** the midst of an almost general abandonment of Christ's **teachings** by many other churches and groups. Modern communications have made it so that while we are not "of the world," we are more and more "**in** it." Behind this concern lies the vast effort the Church is making **in** to watch over curriculum through correlation, the necessary repetition **in** doctrine, **in**structions **in** standards and policies, the handbooks, the counsel given at general conferences, and so forth. **The doctrines of the Church are not ours but His whose church this is! That we must impress upon all.** Failure to keep the doctrines given by Christ pure and simple would cause much human misery here and **in** eternity. For this reason, fruitless speculation, fascination with the mysteries, and the tendency of some teachers to add their own personal embroidery to the fabric of the gospel must be resisted **in** the spirit of love, but also with reproof if necessary.

The greatest danger we face today is the danger of having our teachers make intellectual or academic interpretations of gospel principles. We must never forget what the Prophet Joseph Smith answered one who questioned as to how he "governed" the members of the Church. His answer was, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves." (Quoted by John Taylor, in *Millennial Star* 13 [15 November 1851]: 339.) We must emphasize the importance of those words *correct prin*ciples. If we do not, how can our people "govern themselves"? (68-13)

We can show the power of the doctrines and their applications in individual lives. At times I fear we are so close to the magnificent teachings of the gospel that we lose our sense of wonder and awe at their majesty. We are so close to the scriptures which give us the hard, practical lessons of other dispensations, that we fail to search out those lessons which give important guidance for our own time.

If we can spell out the significance for the individual of the power and implications of the gospel, we can reach members who now are untouched by the power and majesty of the gospel, and we can reach beyond the classrooms and change lives so that the gospel is not merely an academic exercise in which we engage on Sunday. One measure of our effectiveness could be to ask, "What is the Monday Mormon like? Has his life been moved a little closer toward God and will his Sabbath resolution to improve really last?" Only if our members sense how much the truths of the gospel matter will they be likely to change their lives. Our best hope of maintaining doctrinal purity rests with a membership that knows and understands doctrinal implications because they have "witnessed for themselves." Without that conviction, our members—under the pressures of a changing society, which less and less shares with us the basic teachings of Christ—may become like the members and nonmembers on this continent prior to the Savior's birth: they rationalized the pronouncements

and predictions of the prophets by saying, "It is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come"; they complained about His birthplace because it was to occur "in a land which is far distant, a land which we know not," and, therefore, they could not "witness with [their] own eyes" ([Helaman 16:18-20](#)). This kind of agnosticism infected some in the Church then and could in our time if our members rationalize, question, and lack a personal conviction. We can, if we will, combine our efforts to do a better job of showing the power and majesty of the doctrines of the Church and their implications and applications in the lives of individual members. (68-13)

We can weather any storm by following the

Master's teachings. You and I know how relevant and vital the gospel is—both here and in eternity. But our knowing it is not the same thing as *their* knowing it. We must—in our homes, quorums, classes, manuals and publications—show more clearly how human problems can be solved, finally and lastingly, *only* by following the teachings of the Master. If all members could really believe that statement, we could weather any storm. (68-13)

Answers to theological questions should begin with the first principles of the gospel.

A few weeks ago we met in Chicago with 165 young men who are going into military service, or who are in their basic training in nearby military training stations.

In a discussion period of the seminar being conducted to give them a perspective of their opportunities in the Church while they were in military service, they began asking questions about deep theological problems with which they said they were confronted by their inquiring friends: about conditions in the premortal world, about the Creation, about eternal marriage and temple work, about the hereafter.

The wise and able teacher drew a diagram on the blackboard to resemble ascending steps and then asked a simple, logical question: To reach the topmost step on a ladder, where must you begin? The answer was obvious: with the bottom step first.

Then, to teach one to understand the highest principles and ordinances, where should one begin?

"With the first principles of the gospel," came the answer. The discussion brought out that these first principles of the gospel are: faith, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost, by which one could come to know the truth of all things, the greatest of which revealed knowledge would be the true knowledge of God.

This lesson, of course, was merely another way to impress what the Master meant when He answered a question I have previously quoted: "If any man would know of His doctrine," they must do His will and keep His commandments (see [John 7:17](#)). (69-07, pp. 104-5)

Teach only what has been revealed. I am reminded of an experience we had some years ago with Dr. Joseph F. Merrill of the Council of the Twelve, when one of our new General Authorities said to him, as they approached the general conference: "Brother Merrill, have you got any suggestions for a topic for me for the coming conference?" And Brother Merrill said to him, with a smile: "My dear brother, I don't understand that you and I are expected to bring forth anything new." Now, if we could just remember that; the only thing teachers are supposed to teach so far as the doctrines of the Church are concerned is what has already been revealed, unless the Lord, by revelation and by divine command, chooses or changes or amends what has previously been given. (70-11)

Avoid speculation and theory. It is dangerous for teachers of religion to teach as absolute facts that can't be controverted something that is still **in** the realm of speculation and theory, and when you **find** someone who is **writing** a book **in** which they speak with a pedantic authority as though it was an accomplished fact and couldn't be **gainsaid**, then you put a question mark by it and write "theory." I will tell you what I do as I read these many books that come (and I **think** the day is here when we have got to be more **discriminating in** our **reading** than ever before). Let me suggest a method. As you read these books, no matter who writes them, read carefully down the record, and where their **teaching** is **in** complete agreement with the revelations that the Lord has given us and with the **teachings** of the scriptures, accept it as **being** fact, but where they go off **into** **imaginative** suppositions or speculations that are not fully proved by the scriptures, write out **in** the **margin** the name of the author. It is his idea, you see. **Distinguish as between the individual's idea and that which is supported by scriptures.** (54-07)

Methods, not doctrine, are changing. Keep **in** **mind** that the **principles** of the gospel of Jesus Christ are **divine**. **No one in a position of leadership changes the principles and doctrines of the Church excepting by the Lord's own revelation. But methods must change as the inspired direction comes to those who preside at a given time.** If you will analyze all that is **being** done and the changes which are **taking** place you will realize that the fundamental **doctrines** of the Church are not **changing**. They have to do with methods which must change to meet the circumstances of each situation. **You may be sure that your Brethren who preside are praying most earnestly, and we do not move until we have the assurance, so far as lies within our power, that what we do has the seal of divine approval.** (70-18)

Doctrine remains stable but methods change. It was on an occasion where the First Presidency and the Twelve were

considering the relationship of doctrinal to non-doctrinal changes in the Church that the attention of the late President J. Reuben Clark Jr., whom you will remember was a careful analyst, was called to a certin rule. He asked, "Who made the rule?" Of course, the answer was the First Presidency and the Twelve. Then President Clark answered, "Then the First Presidency and Twelve have the authority to change the rule." He summed up a rather lengthy discussion with this very significant statement, "The principles and doctrines of the kingdom of God are divine. No man changes those doctrines except the Lord by revelation to His prophet, who modifies or extends them, and when the prophet does so he will declare it to be a revelation from the Lord; however, our methods are our own and must change from time to time as circumstances warrant the need for change." This is an important declaration and a point on which some can be confused today as they note changes in methods and procedures to meet the challenges of our so-called changing world. (69-13)

Avoid speculative writings and groups. "Now, my brethren and sisters, if the Church has anything to say to you it will come from them direct and not from the writings of other men. It will come to you in a manner that you will understand it. It will not be speculative. It will come to you philosophically, truthfully, and governed by common sense. God bless you, is my humble prayer." (President Anthony W. Ivins, in Conference Report, October 1931, p. 94.)

Now this is something that needs repeating to this great body of priesthood, because we have a rash of writings by certin persons who claim to be of good standing in the Church, going into considerable detail as they recite their past and present Church affiliations and activities in the foreword, interlude, and advertising. There are sensational predictions and observations, and to make their writings appear to have Church sanction, they use quotations and addresses from

Church leaders, past and present, taken out of context **in** such a **way** as to make it appear as though these quotations were the endorsement of the book they wish to sell to Church members, who may thereby be **in**duced to accept their **writings** as from unquestioned sources.

Now we have also had some who claim to be **in** good **standing in** order to take advantage of the **gathering** of the **Saints** at some of our general conferences, and who have gone so far as to program group **meetings** for their own **interest**, with the obvious hope that by **doing** so, many of our conference visitors may be urged to attend their **meetings**.

Furthermore, some **designing individuals** have solicited opportunities to speak at Church **gatherings**, firesides, priesthood quorums, sacrament **meetings**. Now, brethren, we feel it is of the utmost importance to lift a **warning** voice so that our people will be safeguarded **against** such tactics as an all too obvious self-seeking opportunity to spread their own propaganda for their own **interests**.

We must urge that priesthood leaders use careful discretion **in** **screening** out those whose motives may be subject to serious questions. (73-13, pp. 97-98)

Opposing doctrines cannot both come by the Spirit. If two persons are at variance, **arguing** on different **points** of **doctrine**, no reasonable, **thinking** persons would say that both were **speaking** their different **opinions** by the Spirit of the Lord. (50-02, p. 48)

Teaching Youth

I plead for tolerance on the part of those who labor among the youth. May you be among them, the trusted and valiant servants

who probably because of your patience, your **kindness**, and your **teachings** will build the future strength of this church. (41-04)

I cannot help but observe that there is a significant correlation between the example of parents and the quality of **teaching in** the Church, on the one hand, and the crucial decisions our youth make, on the other. (69-13)

Avoid fictitious stories about heavenly things. Are you **mindful** of your dramatizations that you discard, fictitious **incidents in** the lives of sacred characters? How careful must we be that we do not build **in** the child's concept of God a sort of a Santa Claus impression of Him. We must, rather, take the position that the Apostle Paul did to the Hebrews when he said, **in** essence: "For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the **feelings** of our **infirmity**. For he was tempted **in** all **points**, even as we are, yet he was without **sin**. Let us, therefore, come boldly **into** his throne of grace and ask for his mercy and his grace to help us **in** our time of need." (See [Hebrews 4:15-16](#).)

May I plead with you teachers of children that you do not make fictitious reference to the Lord and Savior of the world. May you stay with the context of the scripture and reduce it to understandable terms **in** order that the full reverence for sacred **things** might be impressed upon you.

This may be **something** of almost hearsay to some, but let me ask you, last Christmas did none of you hear the **reading** of "The Littlest Angel"? Well, I would like to plead with you, if you did have it and you have it anywhere **in** your files, to bury it so deep before next Christmas that you cannot **find** it for the performance of children next Christmas. There, **again**, we are **doing something** for the enjoyment of the children that subtracts from sacred **things**. (48-05)

To be effective, gospel teachers should have certain qualities. During my childhood, the most impressive religious lessons I learned were from the Sunday School classes. Very few Sunday School teachers, however, stand out today in my memory as having made a lasting contribution to my religious education. One of these, now white-haired and in her seventies, had a peculiar ability, so it seemed, to burn deep into my soul the lessons of Church history, morality, and gospel truth in such a way that today, nearly forty years later, I find myself still remembering and being guided by her lessons.

What was it that gave her the essential qualities of a successful Sunday School teacher? She was not possessed of great secular knowledge nor was she well schooled in the theories and practices of modern pedagogy. Her appearance was plain and ordinary—that of a wife and mother in a small country community where necessity demanded long hours of toil from all family members. There were three endowments which, in my opinion, made her teachings effective: first, she had the faculty of making every pupil feel that she had a personal interest in him; second, she had a knowledge of and a love for the gospel and had the ability to so aptly illustrate each lesson as to make it apply to our own lives; and third, she had an absolute faith in God and an unswerving testimony of the divinity of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

There was another less obvious but a most vital and essential qualification for this and every other person who would be a teacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord has declared the law of the teacher in these words: "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" ([D&C 42:14](#)).

Such a one who prays for help in his teaching will have the power of the Holy Ghost, and his teachings will be, as Nephi

declared, "[carried **in**to] the hearts of the children of men by the power of the Holy Ghost" ([2 Nephi 33:1](#)). (49-05, pp. 477-78, 479)

Don't teach children things they must unlearn. Be sure, teachers, that not one of you will ever be guilty of **teaching** a child things he will have to unlearn tomorrow, when he learns the truth, either by your example or by your **in**struction. (55-02)

Teachers can provide defenses for youth. Sometimes if you, as a humble teacher, are follow**in**g the Spirit, you too may be putt**in**g **in**to the m**in**ds of youth someth**in**g that will fortify them and provide the antidote aga**in**st the poison that is seep**in**g **in**to their souls. (56-06)

Teachers have a responsibility to build faith. Teachers, don't you see that you have **in** your hand the opportunity to build that faith **in** God which lays the foundation for a means of communication between young people and God, because you are **teaching** him the **way** to God and an understand**in**g of how to comprehend Him? Suppose that contrary to that you put doubts **in**to his m**in**d. Suppose that you stir him up to oppose the **teaching**s of the Church or to cause him to question the authority of the President of the Church. Do you see what happens? You are tak**in**g the very ground out from under the boy that would help to provide the foundation for his life. I would hope that you teachers would do this: after you have delivered a lesson and discussed a prin**in**ciple that you would **always** close your lessons with a **ringin**g, **sin**cere testimony. Do you remember what Paul said, "For if the trumpet give an uncerta**in** sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" ([1 Corin](#)thians 14:8.) Let yours be the certa**in** sound of a certa**in** testimony that you know that God lives, and bear that testimony so that they, too, might know and be so fortified. (56-06)

We must have a testimony of what we teach. When [the Savior] said that [the disciples] must become converted (see [Matthew 18:3](#)), He was talking about a more complete conversion than they then had if they were ever to qualify for the kingdom which He was now to establish.

In counsel to Peter, an Apostle, He mentioned something more that this word *converted* was to mean. He said, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren" ([Luke 22:32](#)).

In this He has suggested one of the vital qualifications of you who teach our children. Never can you be a true teacher of children until you yourself are converted. That means you must obtain a testimony of that which you would teach. This is clearly indicated in the Lord's revelation to us today when He said, "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" ([D&C 42:14](#)). ([57-06](#))

Those who teach children must not cause them to stumble. Now, how can you "offend one of these little ones," as the Master warned, and come under His condemnation? If you were to cause a little child to stumble, a little child who has come from a believing home, and by your lack of faith, or by your conduct, or by an unseeming word, if you were to cause a little one to stumble and fall and go astray, the Lord says it is better that a millstone were tied about your neck and you were drowned in the depths of the sea (see [Matthew 18:6](#); [D&C 121:22](#)), meaning it would be better that you [would] never teach one of our little ones. ([57-06](#))

Teach students correct principles. Now, in order to impress againin the importance of teaching, may I call to your attention some questions which would go unresolved and unanswered if

we didn't have good **teaching**. How can we know whether an act is right or wrong?

For example, is an unlicensed sexual act a **sin**? Is it harmful to no one but yourself? Why is it wrong to steal? Why should we taboo **smoking** or **drinking** or **gambling** or Sabbath **breaking**? When is war a crime? Let me ask a few more questions **in** an attempt to impress the importance of **teaching** and **saving** souls. How can we tame the savage? How can we reclaim the **sin**ner? How can we fortify childhood **against** the follies of youth or **against** the pitfalls or temptations we are sure will come to them? How can one who is now **in**active be won **into** service? How do you **bring** a convert **into** the Church?

Shall I give you **in** one sentence the [Prophet Joseph Smith's] answer to all these questions? "I teach them correct **pr**inciples, and they govern themselves" (quoted by John Taylor, **in** *Millennial Star* 13 [15 November 1851]: 339). There's your answer. If you [teachers] do your work effectively and successfully, those who sit under your voice will one day compensate your efforts by **go**ing on missions, **go**ing to the house of the Lord with their companions, and **becom**ing trusted citizens **in** the house of God. (57-06)

Parents and leaders must bear testimony to the youth. You parents and all who lead youth, don't neglect to bear your testimony to them so that they may have someth**in**g to **cl**ing to when turmoil comes **in** their lives and the temptations and the fires of Satan are burn**in**g hot **in** their lives. Through your lives and your actions, reflect the light of truth from heaven to all the world. "Let your light so sh**in**e that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is **in** heaven" ([Matthew 5:16](#)). (69-11, p. 10)

Our efforts will affect youth. Wherever one travels **in** the Church today he is faced with deepening concern about the future of our Latter-day Saint youth. The concern is warranted, **since** the future of the Church is bound up **in** our youth. It is they who will soon be presiding over families, quorums, stakes, wards, and auxiliaries.

Clearly, what we do now, or what we do not do, by **way** of preparing them will affect their capacity to lead the Church and to love their families, the gospel, and their fellow Church members. (71-05, p. 63)

There is danger in teachers with no faith. Karl G. Maeser said, "Rather I would that a child of mine be **in** a den of serpents than under the **influence** of a teacher who has no faith **in** God." Ours is the responsibility, then, to make certain that these speculations and these notions **in** the Church are not given an airing **in** the classes taught to the Latter-day Saint youth. (53-08, p. 110)

Teachers must dispel doubts in students' minds. Ofttimes, [teachers] have students **in** their classes who have come **away** with a false notion. One of the most dangerous things that one can do as a teacher is to leave dangling **in** the air, at the close of a class discussion, some unresolved question. If there have come questions, attempt to resolve them and settle the matter and give a class of students the definite doctrine to clarify their minds as to the truth. Don't let them go from the class with some doubt **in** their minds. If a question of doubt has been raised, make sure that before that class ends, the matter is clarified so that they cannot misunderstand. (54-06)

Testimony is the greatest thrill a teacher can give. The greatest thrill that our teachers can give each of our youth is the thrill that comes when the Spirit of the Almighty comes **into** his soul and whispers that testimony—when he knows that God lives

and that this is the church of the kingdom of God. That is the greatest of all the thrills. (53-08, p. 113)

Love is a vital element in teaching. We hear much about love as an element in teaching. This recalls an experience when our first little five-year-old trudged off alone to a great big school. I myself had been a principal of schools before, but somehow that morning was a very difficult morning for me. I went home for lunch; and, on some pretext or other, I went over to the school. And as I stood before the kindergarten teacher, embarrassed now that I was there and wondering what I was going to say to her, I finally blurted out, "Miss Sanders, we have sent to you today the most precious thing we have in all the world—our first little five-year-old. We are not concerned about the details of what you teach her—numbering, lettering, writing, and so on. There is only one thing that is in our hearts. We want you to love our little girl, and we want you to teach her to love you. If you'll do that, that's all we ask of you for our little girl."

The more I have seen of teaching, the more I think that this is the great demand upon those who teach our children. You love them and teach them to love you, and I will take a chance on the outcome of your instruction. (63-05, pp. 206-7)

To help students, teachers must first have a testimony. [The youth of the Church] have fertile minds, and you have the chance to plant the seed that will develop into faith, into knowledge, into testimony, and into certainty, and perhaps keep them clean. It was old Father Cyprian, one of the defenders of the faith, who said, in talking of his testimony, "Into my heart, purified of all sin, there entered a light which came from on high, and then suddenly and in a marvelous manner, I saw certainty succeed doubt." So it could be with all your students, but it first has to be by you. You can't light a fire in another soul until that fire is first burning in your own soul. (66-07)

Any effort to save a child is worth it. "Am I my brother's keeper?" What responsibility to this boy do I have whom everybody else has discarded? He is a tough little rascal. He is kicking up a lot of dust. He has gotten out of hand. He is not coming to his MIA. He doesn't attend his priesthood meeting. He is just a "hell-raiser." But he is somebody's boy. He may be my boy.

It may be as Horace Mann once answered when he was called to dedicate a great school for boys. ***In*** his talk he said, "If this school, costing all the millions that it has cost, is able to save but one boy, it is worth all that it has cost." One of his friends said to him after the meeting, "You let your enthusiasm run ***away*** with you, didn't you? You don't mean that the millions we have spent here would be worth it all if we saved just one boy." Horace Mann looked at him and replied, "No, my friend, it wouldn't be too much to spend if that one boy were my son."

I want to tell you it wouldn't be too much if that were one of my grandsons. They're precious to me, and some of them are stubborn, hardheaded, and rascals just like their grandfather, hard to manage and difficult. If somebody, please God, would just steer them past this dangerous age so that maybe they will ***find*** themselves like someone tried to help me when I was at that dangerous age, I would be most grateful.

And so you leaders, ***into*** your hands we are trusting these boys.
(68-06)

Teachers of youth must set an example. The Apostle Paul was talking to a group who probably were his converts of another day. And when he came back he found those who had been idol worshipers not actually worshipping idols but they were going into temples where idols were being worshiped; and so he said: "But

take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblinginblock to them that are weak" (1 Corinthians 8:9).

The Apostle Paul is impressing another great thing that you must think about—the importance of good examples on the part of those who profess to teach the youth in God's kingdom: your standards regarding the Sabbath day, keeping the Word of Wisdom, keeping your home life sweet, and keeping away from the dangers of immorality that begins with evil and immoral thoughts. You must set the example of what you would profess to teach. (68-07)

Youth need help in planning careers. Today our youth often need parental and adult help in planning educational and vocational careers. Youth face an extended period of education ; they also face a bewilderinging array of career choices; they will probably need to leave home either for their education or the jobs which follow; many of them will need to be retrainined several times during their life because of our rapidly changing technology. How important it is for us to give them as much love and specific help as we can! (68-13)

Teachings of the Master must guide those working with youth. Unlike some in the world, we do not want to engage in youth worship by imitating them and by being so anxious for the young to like us that we compromise our own integrity and individuality. Nor do we want to be like others in the world who, because of the actions of a few young men and women, would forsake all the young. As in all things, the teachings of the Master must guide us: We must be "wise," not naive; we must love even those who abuse and misuse us; we must be uncompromising as to prininple, but quick to love and to forgive; we must "be ready always" to give others, including the young, reasons for our own deep commitment to the Savior and His kingdom.

May we so serve, love, and lead our young members to prepare them for today and for the future. (70-24)

The youth and the adults want the gospel undiluted. We are convinced that our members are hungry for the gospel, undiluted, with its abundant truths and insights. If our young seem bored with school because their eager minds race ahead of secular curriculum, let us not make the mistake of boring them additionally in our homes or in Church classes by giving them diluted sips of the gospel when they would drink thirstily from the well of living waters! My experiences in speaking at youth conferences, in youth seminars, and in questions from our missionary temple sessions have convinced me that we are failing to satisfy their desires for gospel teachings from their leaders in our sacrament meetings and elsewhere. There are those who have seemed to forget that the most powerful weapons the Lord has given us against all that is evil are, by His own declarations, the plain, simple doctrines of salvation as found in the scriptures. We are shocked when we hear that some of our brethren in so-called sophisticated communities have chosen to discard the outlined courses of study in favor of varied dissertations on subjects which have but remote resemblance to fundamental gospel truths. If our young are skeptical about the relevance of their secular education, let us show them, more than we now do, the many ways in which the gospel is the solution to the human problems about which they express so much idealistic concern. (70-24)

Keep your eye on the prophet. If you can impress nothing else upon a youth, tell him if he wants to be safe in this day to keep his eyes upon the President of the high priesthood of this church, and then you set him the example by doing likewise. (58-08)

Only the prophet speaks for the Church. All over the Church you're being asked this: "What does the Church think about this

or that?" Have you ever heard anybody ask that question? "What does the Church **think** about the civil rights legislation?" "What do they **think** about the war?" "What do they **think** about **drinking** Coca-Cola or Sanka coffee?" Did you ever hear that? "What do they **think** about the Democratic Party or ticket or the Republican ticket?" Did you ever hear that? "How should we vote **in** this forthcoming election?" Now, with most all of those questions, if you answer them, you're going to be **in** trouble. Most all of them. Now, it's the smart man that will say, "There's only one man **in** this church that speaks for the Church, and I'm not that one man."

I **think** nothing could get you **in**to deep water quicker than to answer people on these things, when they say, "What does the Church **think**?" and you want to be smart, so you try to answer what the Church's policy is. Well, you're not the one to make the policies for the Church. You just remember what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Well now, as teachers of our youth, you're not supposed to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. On that subject you're expected to be an expert. You're expected to know your subject. You're expected to have a testimony. And **in** that you'll have great strength. If the President of the Church has not declared the position of the Church, then you shouldn't go shopping for the answer. (66-07)

Teach youth love through service. I quote from George Cornell, religion editor for the Associated Press. He said, "I **think** the secret of what you are doing with your youth is to concern yourself **in teaching** them so many good things that they don't have time for the bad ones." I believe that says it. And that's the secret of what we are trying to say to you—not just to "tell them, and let them forget," as someone has said, or to show them, and help them to remember, but to **in**volve them to do, so that they

will understand. [Scouting] isn't a program to just entertain youth; it is a program to involve them in doing. Real love comes from service, not from having somebody serve them. The more we can put into the program this element of service to someone else, the more truly will we and our boys understand the genius of true love as was said in the scriptures, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" ([John 3:16](#)). One's love is measured by how much he gives, not how much he gets. Don't forget that. (68-06)

Teachers are to teach each child how to climb his own Mount Sinai. You have a challenge, you Primary workers, a clarion call to defense. Here is your responsibility, and you cannot realize your responsibility without the cooperation of the home. And so we are asking for you this year, more than ever before, to draw close to the parents of the children whom you teach, and see underneath the veneer of what may appear to you to be rowdyism, or sometimes almost incorrigibility, to see underneath that veneer the hearts of gold in these lovely children.

May you take as your goal to achieve for every child this which was put in beautiful language by Dr. Karl G. Maeser, that great pioneer teacher. Said he: "There is a Mount Sinai for every child of God if he only knows how to climb it."

Yours is the task to first show to every child of God that Mount Sinai, and yours the task to teach him how to climb it. (50-06, p. 343)

Use stories to instill great truths. If you see in stories to illustrate great truths, not merely something to entertain, but something rather to put in child language great scriptural truths or historical incidents or narratives told in child language, then you are building a great reservoir in the mind of the child that will continue in youth and on through childhood; and when they grow

to be missionaries or out **in** the service, you have given them something **in**g on which they can draw. Remember that, you teachers, as you prepare your lessons. (51-02)

Teach children to love the Lord and His leaders. May I say to you Primary teachers **in**to whose care we trust our children, the all-important th**in**g is not that you teach the children truth, but more important that you teach them to love the truth. The important th**in**g is not that you teach them the story of the life of the Master, but more important that you teach them to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to love Joseph Smith. When you teach them about the lives of the General Authorities, it is not just to recognize their pictures when they see them, or to shake hands with them at stake conference; but the more important th**in**g is that you teach them to love the General Authorities so much that they will listen to their counsel and obey that counsel **in** righteousness. (53-01, p. 353)

The purpose of Primary is to train children. I came across an **in**terest**in**g story from the diary of the founder of the great Primary organization, Sister Aurelia Rogers. She had been visited by Sister Emmel**in**e B. Wells and Sister Eliza R. Snow. They had come out to Farm**in**gton to visit the Relief Society there. Sister Rogers was greatly concerned about the wave of juvenile del**in**quency which was sweep**in**g over that little community, and she talked with Sister Wells and Sister Snow and asked their counsel as to what they thought might be done to protect youth from the vices that seemed to be creep**in**g **in** among them. This is what she wrote:

"I have reflected seriously upon the necessity of more strict discipl**in**e of our little boys and certa**in**ly some of the larger ones who had well deserved the undesirable title of 'hoodlums.' I asked Sister Snow, 'What will our girls do for good husbands if this state of th**in**gs contin**in**ues?' Sister Eliza seemed deeply impressed.

Then I asked, 'Could there not be an organization for little boys, and have them trained to make better men?' While thinking over what was best to be done for the best good of the children I seemed to be carried away in the Spirit, or at least I experienced the feeling of untold happiness which lasted three days and nights."

Out of that inspired feeling there came to our beloved sister, Aurelia Rogers, the inspiration of a movement which now is numbered by the tens of thousands of children and workers throughout all Zion. Her suggestions were carried to Sister Snow and Sister Wells, and from them to the General Authorities of the Church who, with some refinement, then authorized the commencement of the great Primary organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saiints. Sister Rogers saw the vision. She saw the objective of a goal that did not end with merely entertaining children or keeping them busy for an hour, but saw the Primary work in all its activity as merely a means to a great and divine purpose. (54-02, p. 390)

Primary teachers are to teach basic gospel truths. Last Sunday I listened to one of our Primary presidents, and she is here today. She told about one of the teachers in the Primary class of one of the wards who was approached by a little boy. He whispered to her: "Will you take me, and kneel with me, and show me how to pray?" And she was quite taken aback by that request, but she led him into a room and he said: "Now, kneel down with me and show me how so I can go home and show my parents, who are not members of the Church, how to pray."

Take time to teach them how to pray. Teach them what it means to have family prayer. Teach them about home night. Do not be satisfied [simply] with preparing them to be baptized, but make sure that when they are eight years of age they are baptized.

I congratulate you wonderful teachers who are **teaching** our children those fundamental things so necessary to the foundation of a life among the Latter-day Saints. (56-04)

Primary teachers have a great opportunity to influence children. Many of our little children begin attending Primary before they have been subjected to the temptations of Satan—before the age of accountability and shortly thereafter. No group of teachers in this church has a greater privilege to entice and to make an impression while that spirit is burning brightly in the souls of the children of men than do our Primary teachers. (51-01, p. 94)

Responsibilities of Teachers

What you, a teacher, are is more important than what you teach. You never can kinde a fire in any other heart until that fire is burning in your own heart. (57-06)

Not all **teaching** is done in the classroom. A true teacher is always in character. (71-21, p. 7)

Teachers' objective should be to teach "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The Apostle Paul has defined another one of the purposes of the Church organization in his writings to the Ephesians. He declared that the Lord gave this organization "to edify the body of the church," or, in other words, to educate the members of the Church until they would "all come unto a unity of the faith" (see [Ephesians 4:12-13](#)).

Clearly the Apostle Paul saw the importance of the teacher and those who would instruct our members in the doctrines of the Church as another of those divine agencies in the Church to entice against the power of evil. It would be well if all the teachers would understand what the Apostle Paul meant when he said to

the Corinthians: "And I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:1-2.)

That should be the only objective of instructors and teachers in this church, to teach "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." We need not the "excellency of speech or of wisdom," but we need the testimony of God, as Paul said. (49-01, p. 338)

Teach by the Spirit. It isn't so much what we remember, it is what we feel [that is important]. That is the most important thing, and you can't impress anybody unless, as President [Heber J.] Grant says, you are possessed with the Spirit of the Lord; and you can't impress them until they too have a responding Spirit by which they receive. Both are necessary on the part of the teacher and the learner in order for the greatest good to be accomplished. (47-01)

In the Church there is more to teaching than the training of pedagogues. You and I must come to understand that in this church there is more to teaching than just the training of a pedagogue; that beyond the skill of the schoolteacher there is a power that goes beyond sight, that goes beyond hearing, that it is the power that pierces the heart and convicts the soul, remakes an individual and changes a life, and brings peace and consolation from a divine source. (54-04)

Don't be afraid to say you don't know. I call your attention to what the Lord told us in the 101st section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Here the Lord is speaking of things to occur at the time of His second coming: "Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and

the end thereof—things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven" ([D&C 101: 32-34](#)). When that time comes you and I will know more about the creation of this world than we know today.

I appeal to you again as teachers, let's use those three precious words that ought to be used more often by teachers of religion, "I don't know." And we don't know very much because the Lord has not told us. We have these speculations, these theories that if you want to have them in your mind as something to ponder, and something that you never can find a full answer to, go ahead and think about them, but label them for what they are, and do not teach them as facts until the Lord tells us about the details, which presently must be considered in the realm of theory. (54-07)

There are four things essential to teachers. Read again what the Lord has said. I might call it the "law to the teachers." It is contained in [Doctrine and Covenants 42:11-14](#). Here is given the four things essential to the teacher. First, he must have authority. [Second,] we are counseled as to what to teach. He said, "You shall teach the gospel as contained in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon." He does not mention the Doctrine and Covenants nor Pearl of Great Price because at that time, of course, there were no such books. Today, if the Lord were repeating it, He would undoubtedly say, "Preach my gospel as contained in the standard Church works." [Third,] He tells us how to prepare to teach. He says we shall not only teach them but we shall do them, suggesting that no teacher can teach a principle that he himself does not subscribe to and practice. And then finally, "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach." That, to me, is the watchword to the teacher. That is your preparation. Authority to teach, what to teach, your own personal individual preparation to

teach, and **finally** humbl**ing** yourself to get the Spirit of the Holy Ghost. (54-14)

Teachers need the light of divin**e testimony.** A caretaker **in** a great museum was tak**ing** tourists through, show**ing** the pictures and objects of art. About one great pa**inting** that looked very somber they made slight**ing** remarks—criticism of the picture that the old caretaker loved so much.

Finally he said to them, "Ladies and gentlemen, you haven't seen that picture. Come back and I will show it to you." So he took them back to a vantage po**int**, had the lights adjusted just right, lifted the shades until the light was sh**ining in** properly, and then told them the story that the pa**inting** depicted. They were amazed and stood aghast at the creation of a great artist.

So may you teachers of youth everywhere be able to lift the shades, adjust them just right so the light of truth may sh**ine** and guide your students through a dark night while they are prepar**ing** to take their place, **in** order that they won't fail of their appo**in**tments. Remember that many of them are called to just as high a place as men have ever been called **in** this day. Whether or not they achieve the place of their call**ing** will depend **in** no small degree on how well you teach them today.

"What men and women of tomorrow are depends on what we teach youth today!" God grant to every teacher who teaches Latter-day Sa**in**t youth a div**in**e testimony, which can be received only by revelation. Put yourselves **in** the **way** that the power of the Holy Ghost will reveal to you that div**in**e testimony which shall make your feet sure and your **teaching** more cert**ain**. (54-15)

A teacher's home environment is important. You remember when the Prophet went out to translate one morn**ing**, when he took up the Urim and Thummim to go to his task of translat**ing**,

and everything was dark. He couldn't do a thing. Before he left the house, he and Emma apparently had had some harsh words, and until he retraced his steps and perhaps had taken her in his arms, and asked her for forgiveness for his sharp words, he could not translate. When he finally righted the thing in the house, he went back to his task of translation, which was not possible as long as he was in an upset state.

You teachers, your home environment and the relationship you have with your wives, your children, or your husbands is most vital to the spiritual tone that you need to be the teachers of the children of men. (56-06)

The real hero is the one who steadies others. We read a story a few years ago of a near serious accident of a young pilot who was making his first solo flight. He was up over the field and because of high tension he went momentarily blind. He shouted to the man in the control tower, "I've gone blind." Now was a time for a cool head and a steady voice. "Listen carefully—follow my direction and I will guide you down." He told him which controls he should manipulate on the board—to circle the field and lose altitude and finally he was safely down. The real hero of that story was the control operator. And so it is with the teacher—the parent—the one who steadies those about to go astray. (73-02, p. 226)

Gospel teachers sow the most important seeds. [A] principle related to the work of a teacher is the preparation each may have as a sower of the seeds of truth. If one who is honest, who is clean, and who is innocent comes under the influence of a teacher who is properly prepared, then it is as though a seedbed ready for the sower had been prepared; the good seed and the proper skill of a sower are needed in order for another soul to be born into the kingdom of God. We have a great privilege of planting and nourishing the most important seeds, the most

potent seeds, the most vital seeds that this world knows anything **in**g about: the seeds of eternal life, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. (51-01, pp. 94-95)

The Lord blesses teachers when they do their part. May the Lord bless our teachers and **in**spire them to do their part as teachers by first receiv**in**g the bless**in**g under the hands of their presid**in**g officers, hav**in**g been sustai**in**ed and received by those whom they would teach. May they prepare themselves by study**in**g the lessons contain**in**g **in** the scriptures, liv**in**g the prin**ci**ples of the gospel that they would espouse and teach, and, **fin**ally, receiv**in**g the Spirit, which every true teacher has a right to receive. (51-01, p. 102)

Live what you teach. The **sin**ner is never a good teacher of repentance. You th**in**k so? Do you th**in**k that a non-tithe-payer would have much power to preach tith**in**g to his people? Do you th**in**k that one who can't keep the Word of Wisdom would have much **in**fluence **in teaching** others? Do you th**in**k anybody can give someone else the spark to get a testimony if that **in**dividual doesn't himself have a fervent testimony? Before you can light a fire **in** another breast, it must be burn**in**g **in** your own, and it never burns **in** your own until you have prepared yourselves by do**in**g the th**in**gs which you are **teaching**. You must be an example of all which you profess and teach. (62-12)

If you want to be an effective teacher of the gospel, you have to live the prin**ci**ples that you propose to teach. The more perfectly you live the gospel, the more perfectly you will be able to teach the gospel. (60-04)

Teach the awfulness of sin. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." ([Isaiah 57:20-](#)

21.) Now, you see the awfulness of the enticements that we yield to if we fail to keep the commandments of God.

I was with a great teacher, the late President Charles A. Callis, **in** the southern states when he was on the last mission of his life. He was like a father to me and tried to school me **in** my beginning steps as a member of the Twelve. The last **thing** he said by **way** of **in**struction was (and he had repeated this to me on other occasions): "You know the **thing** we ought to be **teaching** throughout the Church is not just repentance from **sin**; what we ought to concern ourselves with is **teaching** the people of this church the awfulness of **sin**. That is where we ought to lay our stress."

That awfulness comes when we, with a realization of how we have fallen short, try to wrap a bandage around the eyes of our soul, but **in** the darkness there are clutch**ing** hands that seem to be tear**ing** a**way** at that bandage and leav**ing** us **in** a cold, clammy sweat as we contemplate how devastat**ing** departure from the path of truth or virtue may have been. (63-01)

Teach doctrine plainly. Now you as teachers are not be**ing** sent out to teach new doctri**ne**. You're to teach the old doctri**ne**s, not so plain**ly** that they can just understand, but you must teach the doctri**ne**s of the Church so plain**ly** that no one can misunderstand. (66-07)

The Savior exemplified principles of good teaching. **In** years gone by I have had the experience of be**ing** under the **in**fluence of many teachers, a few of whom made a profound impression upon me dur**ing** my grow**ing**-up years and also later when I was a teacher. One of these, Howard R. Driggs, left those who were taught by him some last**ing** lessons, particularly as he drew examples of good **teaching** from the record of Jesus, the Master

Teacher. Jesus pointed the way in these principles of good teaching:

1. The Master had a true love of God and God's children.
2. He had a burning belief in His mission to serve and save mankind.
3. He had a clear and sympathetic understanding of human beings and their vital needs.
4. He was a constant, earnest student. He knew the "law and the prophets." He knew history and the social conditions of His time.
5. He could discern truth and was uncompromising in upholding it.
6. His simple language enabled Him to reach and hold hearers from every class and condition.
7. His creative skill made the lessons live for all time.
8. He led people to hunger and thirst after righteousness.
9. He inspired active goodness—a desire to apply the gospel in uplifting service.
10. He demonstrated His faith by living it constantly and courageously. (71-21, p. 5)

A teacher can improve the hearts of men. In a recent lecture, a nationally known speaker concluded with three significant declarations to emphasize the work of a teacher:

"The teacher is the human sculptor whose business it is to mold the living clay."

"Young people are particularly malleable, and with proper **teaching** can be taught correct **prin**inciples."

"If you want to change the face of the world, you must change the hearts of men." (Dr. Carl S. **Win**ters, *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 24, 1971.)

My prayer is for all teachers to sense not only the importance of their **call**ings, but also the great opportunities for improv**in**g the **m**inds and the hearts of men. (71-21, p. 7)

Teacher training must be ongoing. We should be the best taught people on the face of the earth. We have the doctr**in**es—there's no church that has the complete **teach**ings of the gospel as we do. There's no church that tries harder to teach teachers how to teach—both the prospective teachers and those who are **in** service. That has been one of the **fin**est th**in**gs where it has been employed; but I fear that it's sometimes like a vice raid: they raid once, and then they th**in**k they've cleared up all the crime forever. We must repeat that teacher tra**in**ing program month after month and year after year. It must be a contin**u**ing, ongoin**g** process if we expect our teachers to know better how to teach. (73-33)

Teacher development is important. The call**in**g of the gospel teacher is one of the noblest **in** the world. The good teacher can make all the difference **in in**spir**in**g boys and girls and men and women to change their lives and fulfill their highest dest**in**y. The importance of the teacher has been beautifully described by Daniel Webster when he said, "If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; but if we work upon immortal m**in**ds, if we imbue them with **prin**inciples and the just fear of God and love of our fellowman, we engrave upon those tablets someth**in**g that will brighten through all eternity."

With this philosophy **in mind**, the Church has established a program for teacher development. Teachers **in** the Church must be prepared to meet the challenge to those forces that seek to mold the **minds** of men. Satan is on the move as never before. The world is **changing** rapidly **in** both positive and negative **ways**. This program is prepared for three groups: present teachers, prospective teachers, and Church leaders. And, of course, the aim is to **inspire** the **individual** member to **think** about, feel about, and then do **something** about gospel truths and **principles**. To do this, we must and will develop great teachers **in** the Church. (71-31)

Teachers, remember that you were once young. Some of you are just about at the crossroads. Someone said, "He that would pass the latter part of his life with honor and decency must, when he is young, consider that he will one day be old, and remember when he is old that he had once been young." Now, whenever we **find** a teacher that's forgotten that he was once young, we **begin** to **find** a **way** to retire him **in** the school system, because one of the essentials of a successful **seminary** or **institute** teacher is to remember when you are old that you once were young. (66-07)

Teachers should focus on fundamental principles. To impress the need of **being** more concerned about the more fundamental **things**, may I mention a simple experience I had some years ago over **in** the islands of Hawaii. Those were the years when we had very few missionaries **during** wartime. I was on one of the islands with the mission president and there was only one married missionary couple on the island. As we rode over the island **visiting** the various branches, the husband said, "I'm spending a lot of time **teaching** our people that they should not buy ice-cream cones on the Sabbath." Then he asked me if I didn't **think** that was the proper **thing** to do. And I answered, "Yes, technically I am sure you are right. But with so much immorality so

rampant **in** this country, I would **thin**k you could best spend your time with these **thin**gs of greater concern than so much time with **thin**gs of lesser importance." (73-10)

You must be on higher ground to lift another. You cannot lift another soul until you are stand**in**g on higher ground than he is. You must be sure, if you would rescue the man, that you yourself are sett**in**g the example of what you would have him be. You cannot light a fire **in** another soul unless it is burn**in**g **in** your own soul. You teachers, the testimony that you bear, the spirit with which you teach and with which you lead, is one of the most important assets that you can have, as you help to strengthen those who need so much, where**in** you have so much to give. (73-12, p. 187)

Teach people to apply knowledge. Too much time is spent **in teaching** and giv**in**g lessons, and not enough time is spent **in teaching** people to live and apply this knowledge. (68-03)

We must unite in safeguarding the Church from false doctrine. If we were united **in** safeguard**in**g the Church from false doct**ri**nes and error and **in** stand**in**g as watchmen upon the tower as teachers and leaders **in** watch**in**g over the Church, then we would be free from those **thin**gs that cause many to stumble and fall and lose their faith. If we are not thus united, the wolves among us will be sow**in**g the seeds of discord, disharmony, and all that tends to the destruction of the flock. (50-02, pp. 46-47)

Teach the old truths. It isn't the bus**in**ess of our teachers of religion to br**in**g forth any**thin**g new. Their responsibility is to teach the old truths, the simple truths, the foundation **teachings** of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and not to be concerned about speculations that are start**in**g and **intrigu**in**g**, whether true or not. (53-08, p. 109)

Church teachers must not destroy faith. Now, I sat **in** with one of our teachers who was rebell**ing**. He'd written a text to be used **in** the **in**stitutes, and when it was turned down and was not acceptable because it was not correct, he just campaigned, and he now has such a rank apostate attitude that he declares that he doesn't believe the Church was organized as section 20 of the Doctr**in**e and Covenants says it was. He doesn't believe that Joseph Smith had the vision as he testified he had. He th**in**ks the Book of Mormon was written by somebody, but he doesn't know who. He is irritated by th**in**gs that go on **in** the temple and the temple endowments and so on. Now all the spleen and the ugl**in**ess of his soul comes out when he's no longer sustai**in**ed as a teacher, but while he was there, how many m**in**ds he poisoned!

Better that a millstone be tied about your neck and you be drowned **in** the depths of the ocean than to offend one of our Father's little ones (see [Matthew 18:6](#)). You're an ideal, you're a trai**in**ed teacher. And if you're disloyal **in** your **teaching**, and if you lead them astray and put poisonous thoughts **in** their m**in**ds, it may be the th**in**g that will keep them from ever attai**in**ing the high place **in** the k**in**gdom. (66-07)

A teacher with no faith is a danger. May I speak boldly of a few of the dangers of today. There have been some **in**stitute teachers **in** the past who have sometimes been allowed to go too long unchallenged **in** their unorthodox **teachings**. We should have retired them long before they were released from service. We have today **in** the Church some students who were under some of these teachers of that particular time who have lost the faith; and parents **in** tears have lamented the day they ever allowed their child to be under the **in**fluence of a teacher who had no testimony. It rem**in**ded me of what President Karl G. Maeser used to say, "I would rather a child of m**in**e be **in** a den of serpents than under the **in**fluence of a teacher who has no faith **in** God." (68-07)

Don't presume to answer what the Lord has not answered. Please don't try to answer what the Lord has not seen fit to answer. It has been said by, and perhaps **in**correctly quoted of one of our brethren of a past generation, that one time he stood before a congregation and said, "I will now presume to elucidate upon a matter which the Lord has revealed but very little." Now, that is the **kin**d of sermon that you ought never try to preach. Where the Lord has not seen fit to tell us, we ought not to have the temerity so to teach. (54-06)

Teach only what the prophets teach. It seemed necessary **in** every dispensation to set up the measure by which the world could know falsehood from truth (see [Moroni 7](#); [D&C 50](#)). Again **in** and again Paul was wise enough to say to the **Corin**thians (here was one of the most learned men of his day; he was brilliant; he had been taught by one of the greatest teachers of the day, a master of the law): "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declar**in**g unto you the testimony of God. For I determ**in**ed not to know any th**in**g among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you **in** weakness, and **in** fear, and **in** much trembl**in**g. And my speech and my preach**in**g was not with entic**in**g words of man's wisdom, but **in** demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God." ([1 Corin](#)thians 2:1-5.)

And so the Lord told us someth**in**g like that **in** this day. He said, "Let them journey from thence preach**in**g the word by the **way**, say**in**g none other th**in**gs than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith" ([D&C 52:9](#)). Now, you teachers heed that. Teach what was taught by the prophets and Apostles, and teach what you do "by the Comforter" and by the "prayer of faith." That is what the Lord has told us **in** this day. (68-07)