

Course Introductory Quotes: Studying Theology

LDS Should Be Profound Theologians

Discourses of Brigham Young, Pg.258.

There are a great many branches of education: some go to college to learn languages, some to study law, some to study physics, and some to study astronomy, and various other branches of science. We want every branch of science taught in this place that is taught in the world. But our favorite study is that branch which particularly belongs to the Elders of Israel — namely, **theology**. Every Elder [and President Kimball added and sister] should become a **profound theologian — should understand this branch better than all the world**. [*JD* 6:317.]

... We are now in the school of theology and making rapid progress in the study of this celestial science. I admit there are some few dunces in the school: some advance at a very slow pace, and some not at all. It would be difficult to tell whether they enjoy anything or not, or whether they are in the faith or not. [*JD* 6:318.]

Sister Scriptorians

Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign* November 1979, 102. See also Pr’d/RS manual for 2007, 221.

I stress again the deep need each woman has to study the scriptures. We want our homes to be blessed with sister scriptorians — whether you are single or married, young or old, widowed or living in a family.... Become scholars of the scriptures ...

Gospel Scholarship

Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:58-59.

In the world today there is an appalling ignorance of the true teachings of the scriptures. There has never been a time before when so many have known so little about Deity and his laws. Nor has there been a time when the opportunity to learn the basic principles of salvation has been available to so many. But instead, “darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people” (D&C 112: 23); it is “as with the people, so with the priest” (Isa. 24:2); apostasy is universal, except among the Latter-day Saints.

But even in the true Church there are few sound scriptorians and theologians who have a comprehensive knowledge of revealed truth. So far this dispensation has not been noted for the diffusion of real gospel scholarship among the elders and saints generally. There are few modern experts on the gospel. Few have paid the price of intense study, of determined self-discipline, and of righteous living necessary to gain a broad knowledge of the truths of salvation. Nearly all members of the Church need to study the revealed word far more than they now do. Even a brief daily study period works miracles in adding to one’s knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel.

Deep & Hard Doctrine

Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 3:159. [RE: Hebrews 5:11-14.]

“Christ’s ministers should advance beyond the milk of the work and be qualified to teach deep and hard doctrine.”

Uppermost Subject.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 2:1.

Salvation should be a subject uppermost in the mind’s of all men. It is, without question, the most important subject that could possibly be considered, and yet there are so few among the many who pay any attention whatever to this great and important theme, as it may be applied in their lives

The Gospel Should Be Studied More Intensively Than Any School or College Subject

John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p.15-17.

Specifically, what must a person do in his quest for a testimony?

First, there must be a desire for truth. That is the beginning of all human progress, in school, in active life, in every human occupation. The desire to know the truth of the gospel must be insistent constant, overwhelming, burning. It must be a driving force. A “devil-may-care” attitude will not do. Otherwise, the seeker will not pay the required price for the testimony....

Second, the seeker for a testimony must recognize his own limitations.... There are truths beyond the material universe. Indeed, a testimony may be said to begin with the acceptance of God, who transcends as well as encompasses material things. The seeker for a testimony feels the need of help beyond his own powers ... The seeker for a testimony prays to the Lord for help. Such a prayer must be as insistent and constant as the desire.

Third, an effort must be put forth to learn the gospel, to understand it, to comprehend the relationship of its principles. The gospel must be studied, otherwise no test of its truth may sanely be applied to it. That study must be wide, for the gospel is so organized that in it is a place for every truth, of every name and nature. That study must be constantly continued, for the content of the gospel is illimitable.

It is a paradox that men will gladly devote time every day for many years to learn a science or an art; yet will expect to win a **knowledge of the gospel, which comprehends all sciences and arts**, through perfunctory glances at books or occasional listening to sermons. **The gospel should be studied more intensively than any school or college subject**. They who pass opinion on the gospel without having given it intimate and careful study are not lovers of truth, and **their opinions are worthless....**

Fourth, the gospel must be woven into the pattern of life. It must be tested in practice....

A testimony of the truth of the gospel comes, then, from: (1) Desire, (2) Prayer, (3) Study, and (4) Practice.

Something New To Think About — A Philosophy for Teaching

Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 364.

“It has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries—new things—for my hearers.”

Mark Your Scriptures — Overview the Plan of Salvation

Elder Boyd K. Packer, [1993 CES Doctrine and Covenants & Church History Symposium]

“Our youth need to know how to mark the scriptures. ...

“Whatever course you teach, a brief overview, even in outline form, can form a framework upon which our youth can place the truths that you will present. Many of which come at random. There is one framework which fits every course you teach. Elements of it are everywhere in the scriptures:

“... A brief overview of the ‘plan of happiness,’... if given at the very beginning of the course and then revisited occasionally, will be of immense value to your students.”

What Our Students Want & Need

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., “The Charted Course of the Church in Education.” (8 August 1938).

“I shall speak very frankly, for we have passed the place where we may wisely talk in ambiguous words and veiled phrases. We must say plainly what we mean, because the future of our youth, both here on earth and in the hereafter, as also the welfare of the whole Church, are at stake.

“The youth of the Church, your students, are in great majority sound in thought and in spirit. The problem primarily is to keep them sound, not to convert them.

“The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the spirit; they are eager to learn the Gospel, and they want it **straight, undiluted....**

“These students are prepared to believe and understand that all these things are matters of faith, **not** to be explained or understood by any process of human **reason**, and probably **not** by any experiment of known physical **sciences**. [He having quoted 1 Cor 2:11-12; Gal 5:16-18; D&C 58:3; D&C 76:12, 19-24, 28; Moses 1:11.]

“These students (to put the matter shortly) are prepared to understand and to believe that there is a natural world and there is a spiritual world; that the things of the natural world will not explain the things of the spiritual world; that the things of the spiritual world cannot be understood or comprehended by the things of the natural world; that you cannot rationalize the things of the spirit, because first, the things of the spirit are not sufficiently known and comprehended, and secondly, because finite mind and reason

cannot comprehend nor explain infinite wisdom and ultimate truth.

“These students already know that they must be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and do good to all men, and that “if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” — these things they have been taught from very birth. They should be encouraged in all proper ways to do these things which they know to be true, **but they do not need to have a year’s course of instruction** to make them believe and know them.

“These students fully sense the hollowness of teachings which would make the Gospel plan a mere system of ethics [mankind’s proper dealings with mankind]; they know that Christ’s teachings are in the highest degree ethical, but they also know they are more than this. They will see that ethics relate primarily to the doings of this life, and that to make the Gospel a mere system of ethics is to confess a lack of faith, if not a disbelief, in the hereafter. They know that the Gospel teachings not only touch this life, but the life that is to come, with its salvation and exaltation as the final goal.

“... They sense by the spirit they have, that the testimony they seek is engendered and nurtured by the testimony of others [see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 148], and that to gain this testimony which they seek for, one living, burning, honest testimony of a righteous God-fearing man that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph was God’s prophet is worth a thousand books and lectures aimed at debasing the Gospel to a system of ethics or seeking to rationalize infinity....

“The teaching of a system of ethics to the students is not a sufficient reason for running our seminaries and institutes.... But there are the great principles involved in eternal life, the Priesthood, the resurrection, and many like other things, that go way beyond these canons of good living. These great fundamental principles also must be taught to the youth; they are the things the youth wish first to know about....

“The successful seminary or institute teacher must also possess another of the rare and valuable elements of character — a twin brother of moral courage and often mistaken for it — I mean intellectual courage — the courage to affirm principles, beliefs, and faith that may not always be considered as harmonizing with such knowledge — scientific or otherwise — as the teacher or his educational colleagues may believe they possess....

“For any Latter-day Saint psychologist, chemist, physicist, geologist, archaeologist, or any other scientist, to explain away, or misinterpret, or evade or elude, or most of all, to repudiate or to deny, the great fundamental doctrines of the Church in which he professes to believe, is to give the lie to his intellect

“... to apply to our spiritually minded and religiously alert youth a plan evolved to teach religion to youth having no interest or concern in matters of the spirit, would not only fail in meeting our actual religious

needs, but would tend to destroy the best qualities which our youth now possess....

“You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in his ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with him. You do not need to disguise religious truths with a cloak of worldly things [parables do this]; you can bring these truths to him openly, in their natural guise. Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. **There is no need for gradual approaches, for ‘bed-time’ stories, for coddling, for patronizing,** or for any of the **other childish devices** used in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperienced and all but spiritually dead....

“You are to teach this Gospel using as your sources and authorities the Standard Works of the Church, and the words of those whom God has called to lead His people in these last days....

“In saying this, I am speaking for the First Presidency....”

A Restatement of the Foregoing Principles
Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “The Foolishness of Teaching,” a presentation to the CES in 1981.

“And that places you, because you [religion teachers] are the kind of teachers that Paul is talking about [in 1 Cor 12:28], that makes you the third great group whose very existence establishes the truth and divinity of the work....

“We are to teach the principles of the gospel. We are to teach the doctrines of salvation. We have some passing interest in ethical principles but not a great deal as far as emphasis in teaching is concerned. If we teach the doctrines of salvation, the ethical concepts automatically follow. We do not need to spend long periods of time or make elaborate presentations in teaching honesty or integrity or unselfishness or some other ethical principle. Any Presbyterian can do that. Any Methodist can do that. But if we teach the doctrines of salvation, which are basic and fundamental, the ethical concepts automatically follow. It is the testimony and knowledge of the truth that causes people to reach high ethical standards in any event....

“We should teach the gospel. We should teach the gospel only. We should teach nothing but the gospel. Ethics are a part of the gospel, but they will take care of themselves if we preach the gospel. Teach doctrine. Teach sound doctrine. Teach the doctrines of the kingdom....

“I suppose that [President Clark’s statement about gradual approaches, ‘bed-time’ stories, coddling, etc., quoted above] has some bearing on games and parties and entertainments and gimmicks which, really, brethren, are poor substitutes for teaching the doctrines of salvation to the students that you have....

“Let me say just a word about false doctrine. We are supposed to teach. Pitfalls we are supposed to avoid are the teaching of false doctrine; **teaching ethics in preference to doctrine; compromising our doctrines with the philosophies of the world; entertaining rather than teaching, and**

using games and gimmicks rather than sound doctrine, coddling students, as President Clark expressed it.

“We ought to judge everything by gospel standards, not the reverse. Do not take a scientific principle, so-called, and try to make the gospel conform to it. Take the gospel for what it is, and, insofar as you can, make other things conform to it, and if they do not conform to it, forget them. Forget them; do not worry. They will vanish away eventually. In the true sense of the word, the gospel embraces all truth. And everything that is true is going to conform to the principles that God has revealed....

“Now here are some doctrines that weaken faith and may damn. It depends on how injured a person gets to them, and how much emphasis he puts on them, and how much the doctrine begins to govern the affairs of his life. **Evolution** is one of them. Somebody can get to wrapped up in so-called organic evolution that he ends up not believing in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Such a course leads to damnation.

“Somebody can teach that God is progressing in knowledge. And if he begins to believe it, and emphasizes it unduly, and it becomes a ruling thing in his life, then, as the *Lectures on Faith* say, it is not possible for him to have faith unto life and salvation.. He is required to believe, in the Prophet’s language, that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, that he has all power and he knows all things.

“If you teach a doctrine that there is a second chance for salvation, you may lose your soul. You will, if you believe that doctrine to the point that you do not live right and if you go on the assumption that someday you will have the opportunity for salvation even though you did not keep the commandments here....”

Watch Out!

Elder Boyd K. Packer, “A Dedication — To Faith,” *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 29 April 1969, p. 6; *Teachings of the Living Prophets* (SLC: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), p. 41.

“There is almost a **universal tendency** for men and women who are specialists in an academic discipline to judge the Church against the principles of their profession. There is a great need in my mind for us, as students and as teachers, to **consciously and continually** subjugate this tendency and relegate our professional training to a position secondary to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“In other words, rather than to judge the Church and its program against the principles of our profession, we would do well to set the Church and its accepted program as the rule, then judge our academic training against this rule. **This posture is remarkably difficult to achieve and sometimes even more difficult to maintain.**”

D&C 8:2–3.

2 Yea, behold, I will tell you in your **mind** and in your **heart**, by the Holy Ghost, which

shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

3 Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation ...

D&C 130:3.

3 ... the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false.

D&C 50:17–25.

17 Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or **some other way?**

18 And if it by **some other way** it is not of God.

19 And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or **some other way?**

20 If it be **some other way** it is not of God.

21 Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

22 Wherefore, he that preacheth [the teacher] and he that receiveth [the student], [1] **understand** one another, and both are [2] **edified** and [3] **rejoice together**.

23 And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

24 That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

25 And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may chase darkness from among you ...

D&C 85:6. Is the still small voice always pleasant and comfortable?

Bruce R. McConkie, “The Foolishness of Teaching,” (SLC: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981). Suppose I came

here tonight and delivered a great message on teaching, and I did it by the power of the intellect without any of the Spirit of God attending. Suppose that every word I said was true, no error whatever, but it was an intellectual presentation. This revelation says: “If it be by some other way it is not of God.” (D&C 50:18.) That is, God did not present the message through me because I used the power of the intellect instead of the power of the Spirit. Intellectual things — reason and logic — can do some good, and they can prepare the way, and they can get the mind ready to receive the Spirit under certain circumstances. But conversion comes and truth sinks into the hearts of people only when it is taught by the power of the Spirit.

Pres. Howard W. Hunter, “Eternal Investments,” 10 Feb 1989. Let me offer a word of caution on this subject. I think if we are not careful as professional teachers working in the classroom every day, we may begin to try to **counterfeit** the true influence of the Spirit of the Lord by **unworthy and manipulative means**. I get concerned when it appears that strong emotion or free-flowing tears are equated with the presence of the Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, BUT that outward manifestation ought not to be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself.

I have watched a great many of my brethren over the years and we have shared some rare and unspeakable spiritual experiences together. Those experiences have all been different, each special in its own way, and such sacred moments may or may not be accompanied by tears. Very often they are, but sometimes they are accompanied by total silence. Other times they are accompanied by joy. **Always** they are accompanied by a great

manifestation of the **truth**, of revelation to the heart.

Give your students gospel truth powerfully taught; that is the way to give them a spiritual experience. Let it come naturally and as it will, perhaps with the shedding of tears, BUT perhaps not. If what you say is the truth, and you say it purely and with honest conviction, those students will feel the spirit of the truth being taught them and will recognize that inspiration and revelation has come into their hearts.

That is how we build faith. That is how we strengthen testimonies—with the power of the word of God taught in purity and with conviction.

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 203 ff. One great evil is, that men are ignorant of the nature of spirits.... Hence the Methodists, Presbyterians, and others frequently possess a spirit that will cause them to lie down, and during its operation, animation is frequently entirely suspended; they consider it to be the power of God, and a glorious manifestation from God — a manifestation of what? Is there any intelligence [facts, information] communicated? Are the curtains of heaven withdrawn, or the purposes of God developed? Have they seen and conversed with an angel —or have the glories of futurity burst upon their view? No! but their body has been inanimate, the operation of their spirit suspended, and all the intelligence that can be obtained from them when they arise, is a shout of “glory,” or “hallelujah,” or some other incoherent expression; but they have had “the power.” ... **for nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God.**