

Elder Thomas S. Monson  
*Of the Council of the Twelve*

● Often we hear the expression, "Times have changed." And perhaps they have. Our generation has witnessed enormous strides in the fields of medicine, transportation, communication, and exploration, to name but a few. However, there are those isolated islands of constancy midst the vast sea of change. For instance, boys are still boys. And they continue to make the same boyish boasts.

### Only a teacher

Some time ago I overheard what I am confident is an oft-repeated conversation. Three very young boys were discussing the relative virtues of their fathers. One spoke out: "My dad is bigger than your dad," to which another replied, "Well, my dad is smarter than your dad." The third boy countered: "My dad is a doctor"; then turning to one boy, he taunted in derision, "and your dad is only a teacher."

The call of a mother terminated the conversation, but the words continued to echo in my ears. Only a teacher. Only a teacher. Only a teacher. One day, each of those small boys will come to appreciate the true worth of inspired teachers and will acknowledge with sincere gratitude the indelible imprint which such teachers will leave on their personal lives.

### "A teacher affects eternity"

"A teacher," as Henry Brook Adams observed, "affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." This truth pertains to each of our teachers: first, the teacher in the home; second, the teacher in the school; third, the teacher in the Church.

Perhaps the teacher you and I remember best is the one who influenced us most. She may have used no chalkboard nor possessed a college degree, but her lessons were everlasting and her concern genuine. Yes, I speak of mother. And in the same breath, I also include father. In reality, every parent is a teacher.

The pupil in such a teacher's divinely commissioned classroom—indeed, the baby who comes to your home or to mine—is a sweet new blossom of humanity, fresh fallen from God's own home to flower on earth.

Such a thought may have prompted the poet to pen the words:

"I took a piece of plastic clay  
And idly fashioned it one day—  
And as my fingers pressed it, still  
It moved and yielded to my will.

"I came again when days were past;  
The bit of clay was hard at last.  
The form I gave it, still it bore,  
And I could change that form no more!

"I took a piece of living clay,  
And gently pressed it day by day,  
And moulded with my power and art  
A young child's soft and yielding heart.

"I came again when years were gone:  
It was a man I looked upon.  
He still that early impress bore,  
And I could fashion it never more."

—Author Unknown

### Time for teaching

Prime time for teaching is fleeting. Opportunities are perishable. The parent who procrastinates the pursuit of his responsibility as a teacher may in years to come gain bitter insight to Whittier's expression: ". . . of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'" (John Greenleaf Whittier, "Maud Muller," stanza 53.)

Should a parent need added inspiration to commence his God-given teaching task, let him remember that the most powerful combination of emotions in the world is not called out by any grand cosmic event nor found in novels or history books—but merely by a parent gazing down upon a sleeping child. "Created in the image of God," that glorious biblical passage, acquires new and vibrant meaning as

a parent repeats this experience. Home becomes a haven called heaven, and loving parents teach their children "to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord." (D&C 68:28.) Never does such an inspired parent fit the description, "only a teacher."

### The teacher in the school

Next, let us consider the teacher in the school. Inevitably, there dawns that tearful morning when home yields to the classroom part of its teaching time. Johnny and Nancy join the happy throng which each day wends its way from the portals of home to the classrooms of school. There a new world is discovered. Our children meet their teachers.

The teacher not only shapes the expectations and ambitions of her pupils, but she also influences their attitudes toward their future and themselves. If she is unskilled, she leaves scars on the lives of youth, cuts deeply into their self-esteem, and distorts their image of themselves as human beings. But if she loves her students and has high expectations of them, their self-confidence will grow, their capabilities will develop, and their future will be assured.

### The power to mislead

Unfortunately, there are those few teachers who delight to destroy faith, rather than build bridges to the good life. Ever must we remember that the power to lead is also the power to mislead, and the power to mislead is the power to destroy.

In the words of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.: "He wounds, maims, and cripples a soul who raises doubts about or destroys faith in the ultimate truths. God will hold such a one strictly accountable; and who can measure the depths to which one shall fall who willfully shatters in another the opportunity for celestial glory?" (*Immortality and Eternal Life*, Vol. 2, p. 128.)

### A guide to truth

Since we cannot control the classroom, we can at least prepare the pupil. You ask: "How?" I answer: "Provide a guide to the glory of the celestial king-

dom of God; even a barometer to distinguish between the truths of God and the theories of men."

Several years ago I held in my hand such a guide. It was a volume of scripture we commonly call the Triple Combination, containing the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. The book was a gift from a loving father to a beautiful, blossoming daughter who followed carefully his advice. On the flyleaf page her father had written these inspired words:

"April 9, 1944

"To My Dear Maurine:

"That you may have a constant measure by which to judge between truth and the errors of man's philosophies, and thus grow in spirituality as you increase in knowledge, I give you this sacred book to read frequently and cherish throughout your life.

"Lovingly your father,  
Harold B. Lee"

### The teacher in the Church

I ask the question: "Only a teacher?"

Finally, let us turn to the teacher we usually meet on Sunday—the teacher in the Church. In such a setting, the history of the past, the hope of the present, and the promise of the future all meet. Here especially, the teacher learns it is easy to be a pharisee, difficult to be a disciple. The teacher is judged by his students—not alone by what and how he teaches, but also by how he lives.

The apostle Paul counseled the Romans:

"Thou . . . which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" (Rom. 2:21-22.)

Paul, that inspired and dynamic teacher, provides us a good example. Perhaps his success secret is revealed through his experience in the dreary dungeon that held him prisoner. Paul knew the tramp, tramp of the soldiers' feet and the clank, clank of the chains which bound him captive. When the

prison warden, who seemed to be favorably inclined toward Paul, asked him whether he needed advice as to how to conduct himself before the emperor, Paul said he had an adviser—the Holy Spirit.

This same Spirit guided Paul as he stood in the midst at Mars' hill, read the inscription "To The Unknown God," and declared: ". . . Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

"God that made the world and all things therein . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

". . . he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

"For in him we live, and move, and have our beings; . . . For we are also his offspring." (Acts 17:23-24, 25, 28.)

Again the question, "Only a teacher?"

### The Master Teacher

In the home, the school, or the house of God, there is one teacher whose life overshadows all others. He taught of life and death, of duty and destiny. He lived not to be served, but to serve; not to receive, but to give; not to save his life, but to sacrifice it for others. He described a love more beautiful than lust, a poverty richer than treasure. It was said of this teacher that he taught with authority and not as do the scribes. In today's world, when many men are greedy for gold and for glory, and dominated by a teaching philosophy of "publish or perish," let us remember that this teacher never wrote—once only he wrote on the sand, and the wind destroyed forever his handwriting. His laws were not inscribed upon stone, but upon human hearts. I speak of the master teacher, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind.

### Dedicated teachers

When dedicated teachers respond to his gentle invitation, "Come learn of me," they learn, but they also become partakers of his divine power. It was my experience as a small boy to come under the influence of such a teacher. In our Sunday School class, she taught

us concerning the creation of the world, the fall of Adam, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. She brought to her classroom as honored guests Moses, Joshua, Peter, Thomas, Paul, and Jesus the Christ. Though we did not see them, we learned to love, honor, and emulate them.

### Lesson on giving

Never was her teaching so dynamic nor its impact more everlasting as one Sunday morning when she sadly announced to us the passing of a classmate's mother. We had missed Billy that morning, but knew not the reason for his absence. The lesson featured the theme, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Midway through the lesson, our teacher closed the manual and opened our eyes and our ears and our hearts to the glory of God. She asked, "How much money do we have in our class party fund?"

Depression days prompted a proud answer: "Four dollars and seventy-five cents."

Then ever so gently she suggested: "Billy's family is hard-pressed and grief-stricken. What would you think of the possibility of visiting the family members this morning and giving to them your fund?"

Ever shall I remember the tiny band walking those three city blocks, entering Billy's home, greeting him, his brother, sisters, and father. Noticeably absent was his mother. Always I shall treasure the tears which glistened in the eyes of all as the white envelope containing our precious party fund passed from the delicate hand of our teacher to the needy hand of a heart-broken father. We fairly skipped our way back to the chapel. Our hearts were lighter than they had ever been: our joy more full; our understanding more profound. A God-inspired teacher had taught her boys and girls an eternal lesson of divine truth. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Well could we have echoed the words of the disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Did not our hearts burn within us . . . while [she] opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32.)

### A worthy compliment

I return to the dialogue mentioned earlier. When the boy heard the taunts: "My dad is bigger than yours," "My dad is smarter than yours," "My dad is a doctor," well could he have replied: "Your dad may be bigger than mine; your dad may be smarter than mine; your dad may be a pilot, an engineer or a doctor; but my dad, *my dad is a teacher.*"

May each of us ever merit such a sincere and worthy compliment, I pray humbly, in the name of the master teacher, even the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen. ○

### President Joseph Fielding Smith

The semi-annual conference of the Deseret Sunday School Union will be held this evening at 7 p.m. in the Tabernacle. Sunday School workers are expected to be present. Stake and ward priesthood officers and the public are invited.

Both sessions of our conference today will be rebroadcast over KSL, KIRO at Seattle, KMBZ at Kansas City, and WNYW International Short-wave Radio the following morning beginning at midnight, and will be heard in many parts of the United States and other countries.

The singing for this session has been furnished by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jay E. Welch, with Robert Cundick at the organ.

On behalf of all who have listened to the singing during these sessions of the General Conference today, we express appreciation and our sincere thanks to the members of the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have rendered during these sessions today. God bless them for their desire to serve and to bring happiness to others.

The Tabernacle Choir will now favor us with, "Still, Still With Thee."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Milton W. Russon, former president of the Southern Australian Mission.

The general session of this conference will then be adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

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The Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "Still, Still With Thee."

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Milton W. Russon, former president of the Southern Australian Mission.

The conference was adjourned until Monday, April 6, at 10 a.m.

## THIRD DAY

### MORNING MEETING

#### SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

### SIXTH SESSION

The sixth session of the conference convened in the Tabernacle on Monday, April 6, 1970, at 10 o'clock a.m.

With President Joseph Fielding Smith presiding and President N. Eldon Tanner conducting, this session was a solemn assembly, at which the

First Presidency of the Church was reorganized.

The choral music for this meeting was furnished by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Richard P. Condie. Alexander Schreiner was at the organ console.

President Tanner made the following opening statement: