

eight countries. Whether it be released-time, the early-morning, or the home-study programs, the courses are the same. They center in the scriptures; they teach the doctrine and history of the Church.

Some classes are very humble indeed. President Kimball and I once attended a seminary class in North Dakota. We did not meet in a fine room with a blackboard and projector and special school chairs. We met in the very small bedroom in a very small house.

The teacher, Sister Two Dogs, sat on the edge of the bed. The students crowded together on the floor. It was no less a class than one held in a beautiful building. The most important ingredient, the Spirit of the Lord, was there. I attended a seminary graduation in Omaha, Nebraska. The speaker, again a young man, described this experience.

"Each morning I awoke to the sweet voice of my mother calling out, 'John, John, time to get ready for seminary!' The year rolled on and the mornings grew cold and wet and dark; still the happy voice of Mother would sing out, 'John, John, time to get up for seminary!' " Then he added, "I learned to hate that sound!"

But then, choking back the tears, he thanked his mother for what she had given him. And I think only later did he realize that she had to be up first every morning.

### How free? How safe?

The temptation your children will face will not come at home nor in the

seminary class. It will come later, when they are away from both teacher and parent. One day you must set them free. When that day comes, how *free* will they be, and how *safe*? It will depend on how much truth they have received. I know of a young missionary who, half a world away from his parents and teachers, faced the testing that comes to young manhood. There, beyond the control of either of them, he made a decision. Later he wrote: "I'm so glad I stayed, because during this last month I found something—I found myself."

I thank God for teachers in the Church, you who have chosen, and have been chosen for, the better part.

In those discouraging hours before immature, disinterested, and sometimes impudent students, may you hear a voice as well. That still, small voice of inspiration whispering, "Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you" (D&C 88:78).

The Lord was a teacher. I bear testimony of Him, and pray that He will bless all those who follow in His footsteps to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Benson

Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Theodore M. Burton, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Procedure for preparing Church teaching materials

For the past several years, I have served as Executive Director of the Church Curriculum Department. When I became fully aware of the immense effort required to prepare a

single course of study, I was overwhelmed. I now have much greater appreciation for the approved teaching materials of the Church.

Let me give you an example. The present *Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Supplement*, which was prepared to help teachers teach the New Testa-

ment, was written by a committee of faithful and knowledgeable Church-service writers, who were called and set apart for that service by one of the General Authorities. Their work commenced in the spring of 1980, following General Authority approval of the outline. Writing committee members spent thousands of hours researching, writing, and attending biweekly committee meetings, where the entire committee critiqued each lesson carefully and suggested improvements. The work of the writing committee then was reviewed by General Authority Managing Directors of the Priesthood and Curriculum departments, the General Presidency and the General Board of the Sunday School, Church Editing, and Church Correlation Review. This manual received careful scrutiny at many levels before it was approved for use in Sunday School this year. All teaching materials for the Church follow this same basic procedure in their preparation.

### **Teach from scriptures and approved teaching materials**

Teachers would be well advised to study carefully the scriptures and their manuals before reaching out for supplemental materials. Far too many teachers seem to stray from the approved curriculum materials without fully reviewing them. If teachers feel a need to use some good supplemental resources beyond the scriptures and manuals in presenting a lesson, they should first consider the use of the Church magazines.

Teachers can stay on safe ground when they use the standard works, the approved manuals, and the writings of the General Authorities. Elder Hyrum M. Smith of the Council of the Twelve said, "There is more to be learned in five minutes reading in the Holy Scriptures, more that is worthy of retention in the memory, more that will be helpful if we remember and obey them, than we can find in reading all of the six best sellers in every month in the year" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1917, p. 38).

### **Strengthen quality of teaching**

I believe there is no greater call in the Church than to be an effective teacher. Effective teaching by the Spirit can stir the souls of men with a desire to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ more completely.

In each teaching setting, whether it is a family home evening, a class, a sacrament meeting, or a general or stake conference, the teacher should strive to create a heartfelt desire in his students to live worthy of eternal life with our Heavenly Father.

Regarding the need of effective teaching in the Church, President Kimball gave this counsel: "Please take a particular interest in strengthening and improving the quality of teaching in the Church. . . . I fear at times that all too often many of our members come to church, sit through a class or meeting, and then return home having been largely uninformed. . . . We all need to be touched and nurtured by the Spirit, and effective teaching is one of the most important ways this can happen" (*Ensign*, May 1981, p. 45).

### **A teacher of God's children**

The Apostle Paul placed the priority of teachers in the Church next only to the Apostles and the prophets when he said, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

President Brigham Young used the following story to illustrate the potential influence of teachers: "A traveller in the Eastern country overtook an old gentleman walking towards a town, and asked him, 'Who is the great man of that little town? Who is your leading man? Who is the governor and controlling spirit of that little place?' The old gentleman replied, 'I am the king of that little town.' 'Really,' says the traveller, 'are you the leading man?' 'Yes, sir, I am king in that place, and reign as king.' 'How do you make this to appear? Are you in afflu-

ent circumstances?" "No, I am poor; but in that little village there are so many children. All those children go to my school; I rule the children, and they rule their parents, and that makes me king'" (*Journal of Discourses*, 9:39).

President David O. McKay said, "No greater responsibility can rest upon any man, than to be a teacher of God's children" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, p. 57).

### Strengthen spirituality and foster faith

May we ask you priesthood leaders who call your members to become teachers to be prayerful and concerned when selecting those who will teach in your stakes, wards, or quorums. Be sure to provide ongoing in-service teacher training. Visit the classrooms on occasion, and express genuine interest in the great cause of teaching. Please do not leave this most important work unattended.

The Lord set the example when he sent Paul to the home of Ananias. The Lord did not leave him to flounder in his newly found faith, but rather, as recorded in the ninth chapter of Acts, Paul received specific training to become a mighty gospel teacher and Apostle.

Should not every teaching setting within the Church be a forum of faith, where the teacher strengthens spirituality and fosters faith in the lives of those being taught?

President J. Reuben Clark's instructions to a group of professional teachers apply to all teachers in the Church. He said, "Your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . 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. You are not . . . to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you to be" ("The

Charted Course of the Church in Education" [an address delivered at the Brigham Young University Summer School in Aspen Grove, Utah, 8 Aug. 1938, p. 9]).

### No greater call than teaching

Jesus chided the Sadducees for their incorrect teachings. He said, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). The Lord stressed the need for prayerful preparation by teachers, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants: "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).

One of the great teachers in my life, President N. Eldon Tanner, said: "In my opinion no greater call can come to anyone than to be a teacher in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are all teachers in one way or another, whether we have been called and set apart as such or not" ("Teaching Children of God," *Ensign*, Oct. 1980, p. 2).

Surely no teachers in the Church are more important than fathers and mothers. No classroom is more important than the home. Parents have been commanded to teach their children the gospel. (See D&C 68:25.)

### Study, ponder, and pray

My brothers and sisters, I believe that every human soul is teaching something to someone nearly every minute here in mortality. May we consider with great reverence the trust that the Lord has placed in us to "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom" (D&C 88:77).

May I urge each member of the Church, when you are serving as a teacher, to remember that every human soul is precious to our Father in Heaven, for we are all his children. God's children are entitled to be taught the truths of the gospel in clear and understandable terms so that the

Spirit can confirm the truths of the gospel to them.

My plea to the teachers of the Church is to study, ponder, and pray for guidance in your preparation. Use the scriptures and the approved curriculum materials, teaching with the objective to bless and inspire the lives of those assigned to you. Let us also remember that some of the most effective activation work in the Church is

accomplished by those teachers who reach out to the inactive, loving and teaching them until they are once again in full fellowship with the Saints.

To the Master Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose resurrection we celebrate at this Easter time, I say: I thank thee, oh Lord, for teaching us that there is no greater call than to be an effective teacher. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Theodore M. Burton

### **Association with disfellowshipped or excommunicated**

I would like to confine my remarks today to the principle of forgiveness as it applies to a person who has been disfellowshipped or excommunicated. By applying this principle we can "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). The most loving action the Church can take at times is to disfellowship or excommunicate a person. This statement may seem incongruous to someone who does not understand the true nature of repentance and forgiveness. And even within the Church, members sometimes have difficulty knowing how they should relate to such a person.

Should I limit my association to protect myself in case the sin is contagious? Should I show my disgust that he or she would commit such a serious transgression, and take my business and friendship elsewhere? Should I act as if nothing had happened, or should I show forth increased interest in that person to demonstrate my love and concern? These are important questions which deserve genuine answers.

### **Teach principle of forgiveness**

I am concerned about this matter, for whatever actions are taken have serious consequences both for the

transgressor and for his well-meaning but sometimes ill-informed associates who may be members of the Church in good standing. I am even more concerned about the attitudes of the victims of transgressions—those who were hurt by the transgressor's actions.

For an appropriate example, I look to my own grandchildren. Occasionally they quarrel or speak harshly one to another. But I am amazed and pleased when I observe how quickly the victim of a harsh word or action forgives and forgets. I am delighted that the offender is soon welcomed back into the fold of love by his brothers and sisters. Mother and father teach the offending child not to give offense again. So the family grows in affection.

If we are going to teach our children the principle of forgiveness, we need to begin with our own lives. We must set our children a good example. In dealing with family or friends, we hurt them when we are selfish or thoughtless. But if we change our ways to avoid giving offense in the future, it is easier to receive forgiveness. Repentance is a change of behavior which invites forgiveness. If father and mother forgive each other quickly and afterward show increased love and consideration for each other, their children will quickly learn to act likewise. Repentance and forgiveness will become standards within that family.