

## Elder Richard E. Turley Sr.

### Teaching a young man about the Church

About 10 years ago my wife and I spent most of one Sunday hosting a young graduate student from Harvard University. This young man had come to Salt Lake City to see if the Church was “for real.” His parents, who lived in New England, had told him they had taken the missionary lessons and were planning to be baptized. He asked them to hold off until he came to Salt Lake City. During his tour of Temple Square and other Church facilities, he said that he wanted to speak with someone who also had a scientific and technical background. My name was suggested, and I subsequently received a telephone call.

At the time, our schedule was tight, and the only day we had to visit with this young man was on Sunday. We told him that if he wanted to see what Mormon life was like, we would be happy to have him spend the day with us. We had an interesting and enjoyable time with the young man. We took him to two sacrament meetings that day, one where one of our sons and his wife were speaking and the other where we were the speakers. As we entered the building for our speaking assignment, we were met by the bishop, who quickly took us to his office for a prayer meeting. All of us, including our young friend, knelt around the bishop’s desk, and the bishop offered a humble, unrehearsed prayer.

From the bishop’s office we entered the chapel. We introduced the young man to a young couple and he sat with them during the meeting. My wife and I spoke about the Book of Mormon, which was ideal, especially for the young man, because he had been challenged to read the Book of Mormon.

After the meeting, we took him to our home, where my wife served him one of her delicious dinners. The balance of

our time was spent in sharing with him our testimonies of the Book of Mormon, of Jesus Christ, and of the Restoration of His Church. The next day the young man returned to Boston.

We later had the opportunity to speak to his parents. He had reported to them that indeed the Mormon Church is “for real.” He also mentioned to them that through his study of the Book of Mormon he was able to remove the doubts he had about Jesus Christ.

### We can know truth through the Holy Ghost

It is our understanding that the young man claimed to be an agnostic, meaning that he would have thought it to be impossible to know about the nature or existence of God except through direct experience. Fortunately, his visit to Salt Lake City gave him firsthand experience and the opportunity to observe a day in the life of a family belonging to the Church. He could not, however, have come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ only through his observations.

As he concluded his reading of the Book of Mormon, he would have found the most important key to knowing whether or not the Book of Mormon is true, whether or not Jesus is the Christ, and, in fact, he would have discovered the ultimate key to knowing the truth of all things. Moroni in his concluding chapter stated, “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5).

I have come to realize over the years that it is only through the power of the Holy Ghost that we can bridge the gap between uncertainty and certainty. This explains why Jesus said what He did to Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus had asked His disciples, “Whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15).

And Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

To this, Jesus responded, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

In other words, the Father revealed to Peter as He can now reveal to us, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus of Nazareth, His most beloved and obedient Son, indeed was and is the long-awaited Messiah who had been foretold by all of His prophets since the world began.

### **Prophets help us avoid deception**

As I have reflected upon this young man from Boston, I have also thought of the many other young people who are searching but do not yet know how to find the answer to many of life's questions. Young people are not living in a vacuum and, like all of us, are subjected to what the Apostle Paul called "every wind of doctrine." Let me read from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, where he explained why the Lord has given us apostles, prophets, and other inspired leaders and teachers: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and [be no more] carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14; see also verses 11–13).

How grateful I am for ancient and modern prophets who help us to be aware of those who "lie in wait to deceive."

### **Purpose of our life on earth**

The prophet Isaiah saw our day in vision when the Lord would "proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isaiah 29:14).

This marvelous Restoration has provided that which we need to recognize

misguided philosophies and lifestyles which, although politically and socially acceptable, are not pleasing to our Heavenly Father. If an agnostic, by following Moroni's challenge, could come to believe, others can also come to understand why we have the earth in the first place. In the restored record of Moses, the Lord answers our question as to the purpose of this earth:

"Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?"

"... God said unto Moses: For mine own purpose have I made these things. . . ."

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:30–31, 39).

Philosophies abound which belittle man's position on this earth. In the account of Moses, even he thought after seeing the creations of God that man is nothing, but God made it clear to him that man is everything.

Another example and source for our consideration is the family proclamation which the Brethren issued in 1995 and which very clearly delineates God's purposes and expectations for mankind.

While the nations of the earth spend billions every year trying to discover more about the origins and purpose of the earth and its galaxy, the answer is right here. The earth was created for mankind to help us gain "immortality and eternal life." The details of the Creation are undoubtedly interesting, but much higher on the list of priorities is the need to learn more about our Creator and to accept His invitation to follow Him so that we too may achieve our full potential.

The Spirit will help us in our quest to bridge the gap between uncertainty and certainty. Jesus Christ is our light (see 3 Nephi 18:24). Let us follow this radiant light and invite others to do likewise, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.