

SEEK LEARNING BY FAITH

Elder David A. Bednar

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Address to CES Religious Educators • February 3, 2006 • Jordan Institute of Religion

From these examples we recognize that as learners, you and I are to act and be doers of the word and not simply hearers who are only acted upon. Are you and I agents who act and seek learning by faith, or are we waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are the students we serve acting and seeking to learn by faith, or are they waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are you and I encouraging and helping those whom we serve to seek learning by faith? You and I and our students are to be anxiously engaged in asking, seeking, and knocking (see 3 Nephi 14:7)...

The learning I am describing reaches far beyond mere cognitive comprehension and the retaining and recalling of information. The type of learning about which I am speaking causes us to put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19), to change our hearts (see Mosiah 5:2), and to be converted unto the Lord and to never fall away (see Alma 23:6). Learning by faith requires both “the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34). Learning by faith is the result of the Holy Ghost carrying the power of the word of God both unto and into the heart. Learning by faith cannot be transferred from an instructor to a student through a lecture, a demonstration, or an experiential exercise; rather, a student must exercise faith and act in order to obtain the knowledge for himself or herself...

We are all familiar with the adage that giving a man a fish feeds him for one meal. Teaching the man to fish, on the other hand, feeds him for a lifetime. As gospel instructors, you and I are not in the business of distributing fish; rather, our work is to help individuals learn to “fish” and to become spiritually self-reliant. This important objective is best accomplished as we encourage and facilitate learners acting in accordance with correct principles—as we help them to learn by doing...

I have observed a common characteristic among the instructors who have had the greatest influence in my life. They have helped me to seek learning by faith. They refused to give me easy answers to hard questions. In fact, they did not give me any answers at all. Rather, they pointed the way and helped me take the steps to find my own answers. I certainly did not always appreciate this approach, but experience has enabled me to understand that an answer given by another person usually is not remembered for very long, if remembered at all. But an answer we discover or obtain through the exercise of faith, typically, is retained for a lifetime. The most important learnings of life are caught—not taught. The spiritual understanding you and I have been blessed to receive, and which has been confirmed as true in our hearts, simply cannot be given to another person. The tuition of diligence and learning by faith must be paid to obtain and personally “own” such knowledge. Only in this way can what is known in the mind be transformed into what is felt in the heart. Only in this way can a person move beyond relying upon the spiritual knowledge and experience of others and claim those blessings for himself or herself. Only in this way can we be spiritually prepared for what is coming. We are to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

To Learn and to Teach More Effectively

RICHARD G. SCOTT

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Fortunately, you will almost always have the privilege of encouraging interaction with those you teach... Your instructions will be more beneficial and enduring when you promote that participation...

Write down in a secure place the important things you learn from the Spirit. You will find that as you record a precious impression, often others will come that you would not have otherwise received. Also, the spiritual knowledge you gain will be available throughout your life. Always, day or night, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, seek to recognize and respond to the direction of the Spirit. Have available a piece of paper or a card to record such guidance...

All too often a teacher's relation to a student is one of giving counsel with little or no interaction. Often there is no explanation of the reasons why there are commandments, rules, and standards. The teacher becomes just a talking head.

Most of the teaching in the world is based on one of the five senses—hear, see, touch, smell, or taste. In your classroom you can teach by the power of the Spirit.

Such communication begins by your encouraging each one you teach to participate rather than be a passive listener. In this way you can assess their understanding of what is taught, create a feeling of ownership, and also learn from them. More important, their decision to participate is an exercise in agency that permits the Holy Ghost to communicate a personalized message suited to their individual needs. Creating an atmosphere of participation enhances the probability that the Spirit will teach more important lessons than you can communicate.

That participation will bring into their lives the direction of the Spirit. When you encourage students to raise their hand to respond to a question, while they may not realize it, they signify to the Holy Ghost their willingness to learn. That use of moral agency will allow that Spirit to motivate them and give them more powerful guidance during your time together. Participation allows individuals to *experience* being led by the Spirit. They learn to recognize and feel what spiritual guidance is. It is through the repeated process of feeling impressions, recording them, and obeying them that one learns to depend on the direction of the Spirit more than on communication through the other five senses.

TO UNDERSTAND AND LIVE TRUTH

Elder Richard G. Scott

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Address to CES Religious Educators • February 4, 2005 • Jordan Institute of Religion

I am afraid we have a few students who think all that is needed is to get the material from your notes into their notebooks without encumbering their minds or memories. That may sound like a vicious criticism. It is not intended to be. They are so wonderful. They have so many things they are concerned about. I don't know if I could have survived at their age in the environment in which they live. Each one, however, is precious. We simply must do better...

Never, and I mean never, give a lecture where there is no student participation. A "talking head" is the weakest form of class instruction...

Assure that there is abundant participation because that use of agency by a student authorizes the Holy Ghost to instruct. It also helps the student retain your message. As students verbalize truths, they are confirmed in their souls and strengthen their personal testimonies