

Learning and Teaching in the Lord's Way

Elder David A. Bednar

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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My beloved fellow servants—and I use the word “beloved” in the most genuine sense of the word. Words simply cannot describe the love and admiration I have for you good men and women. Thank you for your faithfulness, for your diligence, and for your consecrated contributions to the work of the Lord.

Hastening the Work of Salvation

Three familiar scriptures provide an important foundation for the message I want to share with you this morning.

Please note the phrase “*I am able to do mine own work*” is used twice in the description of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon contained in 2 Nephi 27.¹ The repetition of this significant statement is important for us to note.

And the powerful statement by the Lord that “*I will hasten my work in its time*” is found in Doctrine and Covenants 88.²

The current leaders of the Church have given timely emphasis to the importance of hastening the work of salvation. But I wonder sometimes if we, as servants of the Lord, believe that we primarily and solely must hasten this supernal work. Clearly, brothers and sisters, we play a vital role in helping the kingdom of God to roll forth throughout all

the world. But, the Lord hastens His work; we do not. First and foremost we always should remember that this work is the Lord's work, and He does the hastening.

Profound implications grow out of the truth that the Lord directs and moves His work forward, which I will try to highlight in a series of questions.

1. Will we keep pace? Will we as individuals and collectively as a church keep pace with the Lord's hastening? Or will we insist on doing things the way they have always been done, or the ways we are accustomed to or comfortable with?

2. Will we learn and teach the Savior's way? Will each of us here today learn, repent, change, and teach more effectively the Savior's way? Or will we be so entangled in the traditions and patterns of the past that we will be unable to keep up with the pace of the Lord's hastening?

If we always do what we have always done, then we will always get what we have always gotten. May I suggest that what we have always done and always gotten were good in their time but need to improve as the Lord is quickening the pace. The Lord's hastening of His work requires us continuously to learn, to

change, and to press forward with faith in the Savior.

The approach used in many of your training group lessons this week is a current and relevant example of the Missionary Department of the Church striving to learn, change, and, hopefully, improve.

You were invited to study and prepare individually and as a couple before attending and participating in many of the sessions. The facilitators and teachers listened more, lectured less, and asked more inspired questions than in previous seminars. All in attendance were encouraged to share insights and observations.

We with responsibility for preparing and presenting the instruction in this seminar feel a tremendous responsibility to not only communicate the needed information, but also to do our best to model the patterns that can help all full-time missionaries become better learners and teachers. We have attempted to incorporate into your experience this week the very patterns of learning and teaching that are vital to your work and ministry.

The publication of *Preach My Gospel* ten years ago, the implementation of the “Come, Follow Me” youth curriculum, and more effective missionary training have enabled elders and sisters all over the world to become better learners and teachers. The Lord’s anointed servants are leading the way to more spiritually sensitive, rigorous, and demanding patterns of learning and teaching. Much progress has been made, but additional improvement is now and will ever be needed.

In the work of the ministry, you look to the leaders of the Church as examples. You do what they do. Your missionaries will look to

you as examples, and they will do what you do. Your example of learning and teaching is vital in the development and success of your missionaries. What all of us do and how it is done in this mission presidents’ seminar will influence the entire missionary force around the world, both now and for generations of elders and sisters yet to serve.

In your life before this mission call, you undoubtedly were successful in many things—your family life, service in the Church, your profession, your role in and contribution in the community in which you lived. But you were not called to serve today because of what you have done in the past. Rather, you were called because the Lord has confidence in what you can and will do in the future. You were not called to serve because of what you have been. You were called because of what you will become and what you will help hundreds of missionaries to become.

And to accomplish His purposes in His way, you will need to leave behind some, perhaps even many, of the ideas and practices that helped you to succeed in so many of your previous pursuits. You should not allow your corporate, professorial, legal, medical, financial, legislative, or any other expertise to determine how you will do the Lord’s work.

I have long admired Elder Dallin H. Oaks for the self-evaluation he undertook shortly after he was called to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He said:

During this period of introspection, I asked myself what kind of an apostle I would be. Would I be a lawyer who had been called to be an apostle, or would I be an apostle who used to be a lawyer? I concluded that the answer to this question depended upon whether

I would try to shape my calling to my own personal qualifications and experience, or whether I would undertake the painful process of trying to shape myself to my calling.

Would I try to perform my calling in the world's ways, or would I try to determine and follow the Lord's ways?³

Because Elder Oaks determined he would follow the Lord's way, the people of the world and the members of the Church have been blessed for 30 years by a mighty Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ who used to be a lawyer and a judge.

In like manner, each of us must decide the path we will follow in the work of the ministry. Will we keep pace as the Lord hastens His work? Will we shape ourselves to the majesty of our callings?

A Pattern in All Things

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith in June of 1831, the Lord declared: "I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations."

I invite you to consider a specific phrase in this verse, "*a pattern in all things*." Interestingly, the Lord gave us "*a*" and not "*the*" pattern for all things. I do not believe the Lord is suggesting with the language "*a pattern in all things*" that He has only one pattern to be used in every situation. Rather, the Lord's way includes a variety of patterns that can be employed to achieve different spiritual objectives.

Consider, for example, the different patterns of learning and teaching in which you have

participated this week. The members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve who have spoken to you from this pulpit delivered inspired and inspiring messages. Questions were not solicited from the audience. Interaction was not invited. Our full attention was focused upon and the maximum amount of time was provided to the Brethren we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators because "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."⁵ Such a pattern is appropriate and effective to achieve particular types of learning outcomes.

In contrast, advance preparation, inviting interaction, and asking and responding to inspired questions were central to many of your group training lessons. With the help of the Spirit, listening to comments, to the questions asked, and to the answers given by other learners can help us to see with new eyes and receive answers to questions we perhaps did not fully realize we had. And engaging in interaction is an exercise of moral agency that invites revelation to help us better understand specific principles, practices, or circumstances. Again, such a pattern can be appropriate and effective in achieving a wide variety of learning outcomes.

Our ultimate goal in any learning and teaching experience should be to determine and use the pattern or patterns that best meet the needs of the learners and achieve the desired learning results.

The Holy Ghost is the Teacher

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead and a Revelator, a Teacher, a Comforter, a Sanctifier, and He brings all things to our remembrance.⁶ Elder James E. Talmage explained, "The Office of the Holy Ghost in His ministrations among men is described in scripture. He is a teacher sent from the Father; and unto those who are

entitled to His tuition He will reveal all things necessary for the soul's advancement." 7 Inviting the Holy Ghost to be *the* teacher is a central purpose in all of the Lord's patterns for learning and teaching.

A learner who exercises moral agency and acts in accordance with correct principles opens his or her heart to the Holy Ghost—and thereby invites His teaching, testifying power, and confirming witness. Learning with and by faith requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception. In the sincerity and consistency of our faith-inspired action, we indicate to our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ our willingness to learn and receive instruction from the Holy Ghost.

Consider how missionaries help investigators to learn by faith. Making and keeping spiritual commitments, such as studying and praying about the Book of Mormon, keeping the commandments, and attending church meetings require an investigator to exercise faith and to act. One of the fundamental responsibilities of a missionary is to help an investigator make and honor commitments—to act and thereby learn by faith. Teaching, exhorting, and explaining, as important as they are, can never convey to an investigator a witness of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. Only as an investigator's faith initiates action and opens the pathway to the heart can the Holy Ghost deliver confirming witnesses. Missionaries obviously must learn to teach by the power of the Spirit. Of equal importance, however, is the responsibility missionaries have to help investigators learn for themselves by faith.

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 awaken unto God,⁸ to put off the natural man,⁹ to change our hearts,¹⁰ and to be converted unto the Lord and to never fall away.¹¹ Learning by faith requires both the heart and a willing mind¹² and 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, from a missionary to an investigator, 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.

Observations about this Week in the MTC

I want to now invite three couples to join me on the stand: President Rodolfo C. and Sister Cristina Franco, who will be serving in the Argentina, Resistencia Mission; President Wayne E. and Sister Tracy E. Maurer, who will be serving in the Philippines Tacloban Mission; and President Clark D. and Sister Christina C. Ivory, who will be serving in the Romania Moldova Mission.

ELDER BEDNAR:

Let me begin by asking this question: What have you learned about learning in the Lord's way? I would like to focus initially on your learning and preparation before you came to the MTC. What have you learned about learning in the Lord's way in all of the weeks and months before you arrived here for the mission presidents' seminar?

SISTER IVORY: I have prepared diligently with all of my assignments. But we are taking an eleven year-old son with us to our mission. I read in the requirements that missionaries should re-read the Book of Mormon in preparation for serving. I felt it was imperative that my little boy read the Book of Mormon with me. We have been reading

diligently—which means that we put it off and now are reading ten pages a day.

We have known for months that there are 531 pages in the Book of Mormon. I talked to him last night and asked, “What page are you on?” My son is on page 525. He is waiting for me to come home so we can finish the last few pages together.

For me, the study and preparation I did opened my mind to the idea that there was one more important thing we needed to do.

ELDER BEDNAR: Was re-reading the Book of Mormon on a list of instructions you got from the Missionary Department?

SISTER IVORY: No, it was not.

ELDER BEDNAR: Which tells you something about where that instruction came from—very personalized, individual teaching by the Holy Ghost.

What did you learn in your preparation before you got here?

PRESIDENT FRANCO: We followed the same pattern. There was a deep desire to learn everything by reading and studying. In the midst of the preparation, in the different training lessons, a scripture came to mind, Jacob 1:5, “because of faith and great anxiety, it truly had been made manifest to us concerning our people.” I realized we must recognize and follow the Spirit. We need to make sure the Spirit is teaching us.

ELDER BEDNAR: May I ask you an additional question? You talked about the desire you had. What happened to that desire as you continued your preparation?

PRESIDENT FRANCO: The desire became deeper because we then thought that we can either have a convert baptism, or we can have people that are converted, who know and understand the doctrine of Christ. Then we will have them enter the waters of baptism.

PRESIDENT IVORY: We had an unbelievable tutor for *Preach My Gospel*. Every time we got onto Skype with him, he would ask us, “How are you doing with your investigators?” He knew that we had introduced a few people to the missionaries.

We would spend the entire time taking the lesson and relating it to the investigators that we were working with. I was so grateful for that because it brought a spirit to the lesson that was unbelievable. We were tearful with every lesson because our *Preach My Gospel* tutor related what we were learning to the people first. He was interested in the people, and we need to do the same.

ELDER BEDNAR: Given what you learned from this tutor and your own experience, what will you do with what you have learned when you get to your field of labor?

PRESIDENT IVORY: We will minister to the people first; we will talk about specific investigators keeping their needs first and foremost. We will relate whatever we are teaching to their particular circumstances so it will impact them.

PRESIDENT MAURER: When we first were given all the materials to study and then could work with a tutor, I thought, “Wow, he is just going to unload all this information, and I am going to receive it and soak it up.” I very quickly learned that I had to put in effort to study and to prepare first. On the Skype

sessions with our tutor, he reflected what we were learning. He helped us.

ELDER BEDNAR: What do you mean, “reflected”?

PRESIDENT MAURER: We shared, and he echoed back and strengthened. He didn’t actually impart words of wisdom and knowledge, but he capitalized on what we had done in our own preparation.

ELDER BEDNAR: Is it correct to say that he was helping you work through, think through, and wrestle with the things you were learning? Is that accurate?

PRESIDENT MAURER: Absolutely.

SISTER MAURER: We actually learned the most at the end of the session after our tutor left. We discussed what we had learned together—actually discovered the things that we needed to learn from that session. It wasn’t necessarily what was spoken during the session, but the analysis of the experience afterward—realizing the things we needed to work on the most.

ELDER BEDNAR: Could I draw your attention to what she just stated, “It was not necessarily what was spoken during the session.” Sometimes we think talking is teaching, and it is not. Teaching is observing and listening—eyes to see, ears to hear—that precedes discerning by the power of the Holy Ghost. Then, and only then, do we know what to say. If we talk without observing and listening, we talk to ourselves in front of other people.

Link what you learned about learning before you got here with what you have experienced these last few days in the MTC. What are your thoughts?

SISTER FRANCO: It is essential to have the Spirit to teach. We cannot teach or learn without it. There is no way. Every time I need to teach anything, I pray earnestly for the Holy Ghost.

ELDER BEDNAR: You have learned a great lesson that the Holy Ghost is the teacher, not us. We have a role to play, but the Holy Ghost is the teacher.

Other observations about what you have learned in the various sessions about learning.

PRESIDENT IVORY: Elder Hallstrom in one of our sessions instructed us to make note of what we feel more than making note of what we hear. I have taken a lot of notes this week, but every time I have felt something with some particular strength, I have started it in the column.

SISTER MAURER: Reflecting back on our preparation, marking the scriptures and studying what we have been asked to has actually allowed me to extend my thinking beyond what I have studied. I was able to learn on a higher level. I was able to think more and focus on the role we are about to take.

ELDER BEDNAR: You have been illuminated by the power of the Spirit.

SISTER MAURER: Yes.

ELDER BEDNAR: That is what happens as the Holy Ghost helps you see and feel and hear what you perhaps have not seen or felt or heard before.

SISTER MAURER: Yes, and I don’t think I could have done that without preparation before.

PRESIDENT FRANCO: The simple, but profound promise of the Lord, "I will tell you in your heart and in your mind," (D&C 8:2) goes beyond any assignment that we may have. There is no question that the Lord will tell us in our hearts and in our minds when we have the desire, and we prepare.

ELDER BEDNAR: How are you going to help elders and sisters and couples learn what you have learned?

SISTER IVORY: One of the things we have seen is the need for a lot of flexibility and adaptability. We must be able to look at our missionaries and try to assess if they really are hearing what we are saying. If they are not, we need to change.

ELDER BEDNAR: We often are too bound to a pre-determined lesson plan. For example, I have six points to cover, and I only have four minutes left. So I have to hurry and cover the last two topics.

Are we going to do things the Lord's way, or are we just going to keep doing it the way we have always done it?

Continue about adaptability, please.

PRESIDENT IVORY: We had a good example of this in our session yesterday morning. Right after we had heard talks from Bishop Caussé and President Uchtdorf, Elder Martino, rather than going right into his program or agenda, asked us what our impressions were concerning the talks.

PRESIDENT FRANCO: Also, we need to be patient as the Lord has been patient with us—make sure that we express our love.

ELDER BEDNAR: Let me share an episode, and then if you have thoughts about it, I

would like to hear them. Several years ago, Sister Bednar and I were in a mission presidents' seminar. We were with the leaders all day, and the next morning we ate breakfast with one of the presidents and his wife. She was on fire. She described what she had done through much of the night based on what she had learned the previous day. She had four pages of notes. She showed them to me. They were stupendous. She said, "I can't wait to get with all the missionaries and tell them about this."

I said, "That is the worst thing you could do."

She really looked like I had offended her. She said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "The knowledge you obtained is yours. You can't give what you learned to the missionaries. Telling them what you have learned will not do them much good. Instead of focusing on what you are going to tell them or teach them, may I simply recommend you consider this question: How will you help them feel the desire to learn? What happened to you yesterday? What fueled your desire? Can you replicate with your missionaries the pattern that inspired you to learn by the power of the Holy Ghost so they will want to learn as you learned? Giving them the notes, giving them the information is nice, but not enough. They are simply borrowing it from you. What will you invite the missionaries to do so that they will obtain it for themselves?"

SISTER FRANCO: Help them understand they need to learn by the Spirit and by following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, similar to when He came to the Americas. He told the people to go to their homes and ponder and pray. If the missionaries come in the spirit of prayer, inviting the Spirit and ready to learn, they will

learn. They will have a spiritual experience. That is what they need.

SISTER IVORY: Edify and instruct. Those are the two things that you have to do to inspire someone. They have to know how to do something, but they have to feel very inspired and uplifted by the Spirit to want to do it.

ELDER BEDNAR: Let me make a series of summary points. Based on what we have tried to incorporate into your learning this week, and my own observations let me suggest these three basic guidelines:

1. Prepare to learn.
2. Interact to edify.
3. Invite to act.

Prepare to learn. In your preparation for the training group sessions, you did advance work. What you learned as couples and as individuals before you came to the MTC was probably the best part of anything you learned. That will be true with your missionaries. If they just show up at a zone conference, and you present a topic, well, that is good. But if they have worked and prepared, if they are thinking about things you have invited them to read, ponder, and pray about before they arrive, then much of the important work will have been accomplished by the power of the Spirit before they gather together.

In preparation for gathering, have them do individually and as companionships what they can and should do. As they gather, there can be a powerful outpouring of the Spirit, and the Holy Ghost becomes the teacher.

When I visit with a mission president, I ask him one question: "President, what did you learn the last time you were out working with

the missionaries?" Far too many mission presidents look bewildered as they attempt to respond because they have not worked with their missionaries.

I don't know how a mission president has any idea what actually is going on in his mission if he is not periodically out working with the missionaries. That is where you observe. That is where you listen and see things you will never see in a zone conference and never come to know in an interview. You begin to recognize that missionaries need help with particular principles or doctrines. Or perhaps they are reluctant to invite an investigator to make and keep a commitment. You will see these things firsthand. Then you will know what to do in a zone conference and in an interview.

Periodically, you go back out with more missionaries and find out what worked and did not work in your efforts to help the missionaries learn.

If you do not go out periodically with the missionaries, I do not know how you will know what is really going on. That is a part of your preparation to learn. Only then can you appropriately help missionaries prepare to learn in interviews and when you have them in a zone conference.

Any reactions or thoughts to what was just said?

PRESIDENT FRANCO: The pattern has been set by the Lord, Himself. He did not sit in an office. He was with the people and teaching. As we follow that pattern and be with the missionaries, we will be able to present to them and learn from them.

ELDER BEDNAR: How great would it be for the missionaries to see you get rejected? That is one of the things with which the

missionaries struggle the most. They will watch how you deal with rejection. All the talks you ever give in zone conference will not be as important. You do not have to do that with every missionary in the mission. If you have that experience with one missionary, do you know how fast that word gets to every other missionary in that mission? There is a multiplier effect in working with missionaries that cannot be equaled in anything else.

Interact to edify. I want to draw your attention to this verse. “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesman at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege.”¹³

This is one of the Lord’s powerful patterns for learning and teaching. Pay attention, please, to the first phrase, “*Appoint among yourselves a teacher.*” We typically would think this refers to a person who directs the discussion or presents the material. May I suggest another way of looking at this verse: “*Appoint among yourselves a teacher.*” Who is the teacher? The Holy Ghost. Could it be that if you want the Holy Ghost to be the teacher, then let not all speak at once, but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken, that all may be edified of all”? The only one that can produce that edification is the Holy Ghost.

Do you use this pattern in all learning situations? No. There are occasions where you need to disseminate information or teach a doctrine. But if that is the only pattern we ever use, because that is what we are most comfortable with, the hastening will pass us by.

There are things the six of you have learned sitting on the stand today that you have never

learned before—things you probably would not learn as well without the opportunity to act and give voice to the things you are feeling and learning.

Thoughts that have come to you that you want to share?

PRESIDENT MAURER: I remember teaching the teachers’ quorum—when I was talking, they were sleeping. But when they were talking and teaching each other in the Savior’s way, I found much greater interest among every student than when I was doing anything.

ELDER BEDNAR: Can I ask you a hard question? How hard was it for you to talk less and let them take the lead?

PRESIDENT MAURER: Initially it was hard. But as I observed them teaching in a much more profound way and noticed the results of their interaction, it was worth the effort to work on it.

ELDER BEDNAR: What helped you to let go?

PRESIDENT MAURER: I think just observing the outcome. I don’t know that there was anything more motivating. They were learning, so I was willing to let go and help encourage them to take a stronger role.

ELDER BEDNAR: Did that surprise you?

PRESIDENT MAURER: No, not really, but it was gratifying.

SISTER IVORY: As a former teacher, I think this type of teaching is tough teaching. In order to have a dialogue, you really have to be prepared. Then you can let it go, but it always needs to come back. It takes a lot of preparation and a lot of thinking. If your

questions aren't right, no one responds to what you ask. You have to experience it and think about it and pray about it.

ELDER BEDNAR: It is not as easy as it looks. It is very demanding. I said earlier the Brethren are leading the way to more spiritually sensitive, rigorous, and demanding patterns of learning and teaching. Will we always do what we have always done and get the same results that we have always gotten, or will we repent and learn and change and teach increasingly the Lord's way?

Invite to act. Just one simple question helps to achieve this goal. What will we do with what we have learned? May I pose that question to you? Based on what you learned preparing to come to the MTC and in these sessions, even today, what will you do with what you have learned?

PRESIDENT IVORY: We have a series of meetings set up with our district presidencies and branch presidents on each of the next three Saturdays in Romania and Moldova. We need to really think about what it is we need to ask them to prepare, to read, to study, and to think about as they come, so they will be ready to be taught, and we are ready to be taught by them.

SISTER MAURER: As inspiration comes, write it down, specific to you and what is perhaps going to occur in your mission. Some of the things we have done as we have gone through these sessions are to develop small strategies in preparation for when we are out

in the field. We haven't developed them fully in a teaching mode, but we have ideas for training. Because of the inspiration we have received, we identify this is what we want to achieve, and this is what we want them to take away.

PRESIDENT FRANCO: We have in our mission six districts, and sacrament meeting attendance is fairly low. We are going to invite the leadership of the different branches and district presidencies to act. There is a promise from the Lord in D&C 31:7 that "I will open the hearts of the people and they will receive you." That is a very powerful promise.

ELDER BEDNAR: I want to thank you with all the energy of my soul for your willingness to be examples of one of the Lord's powerful patterns for learning and teaching.

Presidents and sisters, the Lord is hastening His work. We have a role to play. I pray we will keep pace with the hastening, that we will not just simply do what we have always done the way we have always done it.

In the authority of the holy apostleship, I declare my witness of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. I witness that He lives. He is resurrected. The tomb is empty. He stands at the head of this church and He directs its affairs. He is petitioning all of us to keep pace with His hastening, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ Verses 20 and 21.

² Verse 73.

³ *The Lord's Way* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 7.

⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 52:14.

⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.

⁶ See John 14:16-17; 26; 3 Nephi 27:20.

⁷ *Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft: 1924), 162.

⁸ See Alma 5:7.

⁹ See Mosiah 3:19.

¹⁰ See Mosiah 5:2.

¹¹ See Alma 23:6.

¹² See Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.

¹³ See Doctrine and Covenants 88:122.