

Teach by the Spirit

(Handbook 2: Administering the Church [2010], 5.5.4)

The Savior promised His disciples, “The Holy Ghost . . . shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). Only through the Holy Ghost can we accomplish the ultimate goal of gospel teaching—to build faith in Jesus Christ and help others become more like Him. The Holy Ghost bears witness of the truth, He testifies of Christ, and He changes hearts. No mortal teacher, no matter how skilled or experienced, can replace the Spirit. But we can be instruments in God’s hands to help His children learn by the Spirit. To do this, we invite the influence of the Spirit into our lives and encourage those we teach to do the same.

INVITE THE SPIRIT INTO YOUR TEACHING

The ultimate purpose of everything a gospel teacher does—every question, every scripture, every activity—is to invite the Spirit to build faith and to invite all to come unto Christ. Do all you can to invite the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Lord has promised, “The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith” (D&C 42:14). In addition, sacred music, the scriptures, words of latter-day prophets, expressions of love and testimony, and moments of quiet contemplation can all invite the presence of the Spirit. For example, you might arrange to have soft prelude music playing as class begins.

Questions to ponder. What brings the Spirit into my life? into my home? into my class? What drives Him away? How can I help class members invite the Spirit into their gospel learning?

Scriptural example. What do I learn about the Holy Ghost from John 14:26; Helaman 5:29–30; and Doctrine and Covenants 11:12–13? How could this principle help me teach more like the Savior?

BE A HUMBLE INSTRUMENT OF THE SPIRIT

Sometimes teachers may be tempted to think that it is their knowledge or methods or personality that inspires those they teach. This attitude prevents them from inviting the Holy Ghost to teach class members and change their hearts. Your purpose as a teacher is not to make an impressive presentation but rather to help others receive the influence of the Holy Ghost, who is the true teacher.

Question to ponder. What changes should I make so that I can have the Holy Ghost with me more fully as I teach? (see, for example, D&C 112:10). For a personal evaluation exercise, see

“Improving as a Christlike Teacher” in this resource.

Scriptural example. What does the Spirit teach me as I read about how Alma and the sons of Mosiah became “instruments in the hands of God”? (Mosiah 27:32–37; Alma 17:1–12; 26; 29).

BE FLEXIBLE

Often the best teaching moments are unexpected—for example, when someone shares an experience or asks a question that leads to a meaningful discussion. Allow time for such moments. Listen for promptings—both as you plan and as you teach—and be willing to change your plans if necessary to follow the promptings you receive. If you are spiritually prepared, the Lord can give you “in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:6). Remember that it is more important to follow the impressions of the Spirit than to cover a certain amount of material.

Questions to ponder. When have I felt the Spirit guiding me as a teacher? What can I do to receive His guidance more often?

Scriptural example. As I read 3 Nephi 17:1–9, what do I learn from the Savior’s example as He responded to the needs of those He taught?

INVITE LEARNERS TO ACT

True conversion involves more than just feeling the Spirit confirming truth to our souls; we must also act on those truths. In addition to helping learners feel and recognize

the Spirit, help them act on the promptings they receive. To learn more about inviting learners to act, see “Invite Learners to Act” in this resource.



BEAR YOUR TESTIMONY OFTEN

Your simple, sincere witness of spiritual truth can have a powerful influence on those you teach. A testimony is most powerful when it is direct and heartfelt. It need not be eloquent or lengthy and need not begin with “I’d like to bear my testimony.” Bear testimony often of the specific principles you are teaching. President Joseph F. Smith taught that “such a testimony is as a seal attesting the genuineness” of the principle.¹

Questions to ponder. What opportunities do I have to bear my testimony while teaching—both in my class and in my home? How can I better use these opportunities?

Scriptural example. What do I learn from the way Alma bore his testimony, as recorded in Alma 5:45–48; 36:3–4?

▶ See also the video “A Man without Eloquence” (LDS.org).

INVITE OTHERS TO BEAR TESTIMONY

To invite the Spirit into your teaching, encourage others to share their personal witness of the truth you are discussing. Simply ask class members to share their feelings or experiences about a gospel principle. For example, you could ask, “How do you feel about the Book of Mormon?” or “How has following the prophet blessed your family?” Even small children can bear testimony when prompted in this way.

Question to ponder. As I think about those I teach, whom do I feel prompted to invite to bear testimony?

Scriptural example. As recorded in Matthew 16:15–17 and John 11:20–27, how did the Savior invite Peter and Martha to bear their testimonies?

▶ See also the videos “Thou Art the Christ” and “Invite Us to Testify” (LDS.org).

HELP OTHERS RECOGNIZE THE SPIRIT’S INFLUENCE

One of the most important things you can do as a teacher is to help those you teach recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost. This is especially true when teaching children, youth, and new members—you are preparing them to receive personal revelation, avoid deception, and develop spiritual self-reliance. As prompted by the Holy Ghost, ask learners what they are feeling and what they feel prompted to do. Help them associate their spiritual feelings with the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Question to ponder. How do I know when the Spirit is present as I teach?

Scriptural example. How can I use Galatians 5:22–23; Moroni 7:13; and Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3 to help class members recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost?

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 206.

FOR THE DISCUSSION LEADER

Share and counsel together. Begin by inviting teachers to share recent teaching experiences and ask questions related to teaching.

Learn together. Invite teachers to discuss one or more of the ideas in this section. Do not try to cover everything in one meeting.

Practice. As appropriate, ask teachers to share any spiritual impressions they received during this discussion. What will they do to be guided by the Spirit the next time they teach? In the next teacher council meeting, invite them to share their experiences.

Prepare. Decide together on a topic for the next meeting, and invite teachers to prepare.