

## **D&C#23 "Seek Learning, Even by Study and Also by Faith"**

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### **I. Introduction**

I can still recall being a young boy in the backseat of our car with my father and mother, somewhere between Rexburg, Idaho, and Salt Lake City, Utah, in the middle of the summer. My parents and I had been on a summer vacation and were now on our way home. It was so hot I was perspiring greatly. The car had no air conditioning and even with the windows down, it was only made the car hotter. I looked out the window and saw some men fixing the track on the railroad. While I was certain that my situation was bad, the fate of the man, outside, swinging a sledgehammer, made me realize that life could be worse. I said to my parents, "Why do those men have to work like that on such a hot day?" My Dad's reply was, "They didn't go to college." At that moment, I made a life altering decision. I said, "I'm going to college." Little did I know then that before I was finished, I would complete twenty-three years of formal education. You can see I took the lesson of seeking learning very seriously.

Without the education I received, I would have not been able to do the professional work I enjoyed for over forty years. I would not have been able to earn sufficient income to support my wife and two children. I would not have been able to see both of my children graduate from college. We were not rich, but neither were we poor. While I worked on a weed crew during a couple of summers, I never had to swing a sledgehammer on a hot summer day in Idaho. The pursuit of learning was a great blessing in my life.

Not all the years of my education were valuable, but I did learn a lot about persistence and overcoming challenges. I also came to understand that not everyone believed in God,

nor even thought He was important in an individual's life. Fortunately, I took full advantage of the Church Education program, including serving a mission. I looked forward to Sunday and attending the Gospel Doctrine class. I am grateful for the religious education I received during those years. I also learned that an individual can have many degrees behind their name, but still not know God. For me, whether you choose formal education or vocational training, it is most meaningful when it is also built upon a foundation of faith and personal testimony.

From a personal experience, we turn now to the teachings from the Doctrine and Covenants regarding the importance of learning and study, by faith. We will address both the blessings, as well as the pitfalls education can bring, as viewed from an eternal perspective.

## **II. The School of the Prophets Provides a Pattern for Us to Follow in Our Learning**

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"In this dispensation, the Lord has given great emphasis to the need for spiritual and temporal education.

"The Lord instructed Joseph Smith to begin a School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio. The School of the Prophets began meeting in January 1833 in a small room above the Newel K. Whitney Store in Kirtland. In this school, the leaders of the Church were instructed in gospel doctrine, the affairs of the Church, and other matters. They were to prepare for Church leadership and missionary service (D&C 88:77-80).

"These meetings provided the setting for spiritual experiences and in-depth discussions of gospel principles. Several revelations were received. [The Word of Wisdom on February 27, 1833]. The history of the Church records that 'great joy and satisfaction continually beamed in the countenances of the School of the Prophets, and the Saints, on account of the things revealed, and...progress in the knowledge of God' (*History of the Church*, Vol. 1:334)." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 127).

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"There were two schools conducted in Kirtland. One was the [School of the Prophets, the other], the school of the Elders.

"[Here] they carried out some of the provision of this revelation (D&C 88) in seeking knowledge of countries and kingdoms and languages, all such information as may be gained in the regular daily school. It was in this school were many of the Elders, then residing in Kirtland, hired Dr. Seixas, a learned Hebrew scholar, and under his direction studied the Hebrew language. This school was conducted for several months, and the Prophet and others, became rather proficient in this language due to the guidance of the Lord as much as that of the Hebrew scholar. This school proved to be of great benefit to these brethren in later years." (*Church History and Modern Revelation. A Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums*, 1948. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947, 136).

\*What Opportunities for learning do we have at Church?

The opportunity for learning occurs each Sunday. Initially during the first hour, all members meet together to partake of the Lord's sacrament, and to be taught by other members [adult and youth] regarding a gospel topic, assigned by the Bishop or his counselors. During the second hour, members separate and then attend age-appropriate classes. It begins with the nursery and primary, ages 1½ -11 years, which is for two hours. During the second hour, there are age-specific classes for the youth and adult classes for both men and women. For the adults, the classes include Gospel Essentials, Gospel Doctrine, Family History and Marriage and Family. The learning continues during the third hour with Relief Society for women and Priesthood for men and young men, 12-17 years., and classes especially for the young women, ages 12-17 years.

\*What can we do to better prepare ourselves to learn in our Church meetings?

In many instances the format becomes a lecture, with only limited participation from those in attendance. It would be more beneficial if class members would do some preparation prior to the class. They would then feel more comfortable

to share their thoughts and feelings thereby providing an organized discussion format.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:122-123

**122 Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all maybe edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege.**

**123 See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.**

\*What did the Lord command the brethren in the School of Prophets to do?

A teacher is to be appointed. One student is to speak at a time. All are to contribute with an equal opportunity. They are to impart [understanding] one to another.

\*What did He command them not to do?

Not to speak all at once and not to covet one another.

\*What can we learn from these verses about how to teach one another?

All should have an equal opportunity to participate. We should act in love and kindness one to another.

\*What do these verses say about how we should learn from one another?

We learn best when all are prepared to share with others as opposed to one person doing all the teaching. We should always act with love and kindness, i.e. the opinion of all students is valued.

**III. We Should Learn "by study and also by faith."**

Doctrine and Covenants 88:118

**118 As all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of**

**the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.**

\*Why are study and faith both necessary in our efforts to learn?

Marion G. Romney states,

"I believe in study. I believe that men learn much through study...I also believe, however, and know, that learning by study is greatly accelerated by faith." (*Learning For The Eternities*. Compiled by George J. Romney. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 72).

David A. Bednar adds,

"When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth [the message] unto the heart of the children of men" (B/M, 2 Nephi 33:1). Please notice that the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into* the heart...Ultimately, however, the content of the message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrates into the heart only if a receiver allows them to come.

"Faith is the evidence of things not seen looks to the past and confirms our trust in God and our confidence in the truthfulness of things not seen [The Lord blessed me in the past, and therefore I believe/hope He will bless me now]. We stepped into the darkness with assurance and hope, and [as we do so, we then] received evidence and confirmation as the light in fact moved and provided the illumination we needed. The witness we obtained after the trial of our faith (see B/M, Ether 126) is evidence that enlarges and strengthens our assurance. Assurance, [our] action, and evidence [of past experiences], influence each other in an ongoing process.

"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.

"[When Joseph Smith went to the grove, he] had questions formulated in his mind...Notice that Joseph's questions focused not just on what he needed to know [Which church was true?] but also on what he need to do [Which Church shall I join?]." ("Seek Learning by Faith." *Church Educational System religious education*. Jordan Institute of Religion. February 3, 2006,1-2, 4,6 ).

"How does faith increase our ability to learn?"

After having studied the problem, we are then able to formulate the questions we need to answer. As we exercise our faith in God, and take action, we then receive our answers, Recall the example of Joseph Smith before going to the sacred grove. After gaining the answers he sought, he then took action.

\*What are the dangers of learning without having faith in God and obeying His commandments?

2 Timothy 3:7

**3 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

It is one thing to learn, it is another to know if what one is learning is true. Only as we turn to God for guidance and understanding will we ever be able to know what is true.

B/M, 2 Nephi 9:28-29

**28 O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.**

**29 But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsel of God.**

I believe that we error greatly when we worship at the altar of our own conceit [exaggerated opinion of oneself]. Only when we humble ourselves and turn to God for guidance and direction can we ever hope to discover the truth.

It is important that in addition to studying the gospel, we should seek learning in other areas, such as history, science, and good literature.

John Taylor states,

"We ought to foster education and intelligence of every kind; cultivate literary tastes, and men of literary and scientific talent should improve that talent; and all should magnify the gifts which God has given unto them...If there is anything good and praiseworthy in morals, religion, science, or anything calculated to exalt and ennoble man, we are after it. But with all our getting, we want to get understanding, and that understanding which flows from God." (*The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*. Selected, Arranged, and Annotated by G. Homer Durham. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1943, 277).

\*How has the study of such subjects as [history, science, and good literature] enriched your life?

As we study these and other areas, it serves to broaden our perspective and insight of the world in which we live. We come to a greater appreciation of the knowledge that has been accumulated and the lessons learned. It also helps us not to repeat the errors that were made by other civilizations as we seek to grasp and understand the challenges we face today.

To me leaning by faith means we view the knowledge we gain through the lens of our spiritual understanding. Does it fit with the truths we know of the Gospel? Is it in harmony with the scriptures? Is it congruent with the counsel and inspiration we have received from the prophets and apostles? After pondering and praying over our studies, is it confirmed by the gift of the Holy Ghost? Does it feel right?

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"I should like to suggest that you follow that injunction given by the Son of God. With all of your learning, learn of him. With all your study, seek knowledge of the Master. That knowledge will complement in a wonderful way the secular training you receive and give a fulness to your life and character that can come in no other way." ("The Dimensions of the Spirit," in *Improvement Era*, December 1964 [Vol.73, No.12], 1092).

\*Have you seen that knowledge of the things of God is the most important kind of knowledge?

As noted, my knowledge of the things of God as found in the scriptures, the teachings of the Prophets and Apostles, and my own seeking of confirmation by the Holy Ghost, enabled me to separate out the truth from learned opinion. Being able to know what is true is a great blessing from God, especially when it concern obtaining secular knowledge.

#### **IV. We Should Continue to Learn Throughout Our Lives**

Russell M. Nelson states,

"Because of our sacred regard for each human intellect, we consider the obtaining of an education to be a religious responsibility...Our Creator expects His children everywhere to educate themselves." ("Where Is Wisdom?" in *Ensign*, November 1992, 6).

There are three important questions we need to be able to answer? They are:

(1) Why should we learn?

Doctrine and Covenants 6:7 [Seek for wisdom]

**7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich.**

Doctrine and Covenants 130:18-19 [Take knowledge and intelligence when we die]



18 Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

19 And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

Doctrine and Covenants 131:6 [Not saved in ignorance]

6 It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.

(2) What should we learn?

Doctrine and Covenants 11:21-22 [Seek first obtain word]

21 Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.

22 But now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation, and then shall all things be added thereto.

Doctrine and Covenants 90:15 [All good books, languages, people]

15 And set in order the churches, and study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people.

Doctrine and Covenants 93:36-37, 53 [By light and truth; history, countries, and kingdoms]

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

37 Light and truth forsake that evil one.

53 And verily, I say unto you, that it is my will that you should hasten to translate my scriptures, and to obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and

of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion. Amen.

(3) How can we learn?

Doctrine and Covenants 19:23 [Learn & listen & walk in meekness]

23 Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:77-80, 118 [Doctrine, General subjects, words of wisdom]

77 And I give unto you a commandment that you that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

78 Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

79 Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms--

80 That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.

118 And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

D&C 136:32-33 [Be humble, call upon Lord; Spirit enlighten]

32 Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear;

**33 For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the condemnation of the ungodly.**

\*Why do you think we are commanded to learn about so many different things?

As we go forth to share the gospel with the nations of the world, it is important that we be able to converse with them with a firm understanding of the doctrine of the Church. It is also important that our preparation included the obtaining of a broad education that includes history, government, science, languages, etc. We will then be able to communicate with others regarding areas of common interest. Lastly, our own salvation depends upon our gaining knowledge of the world in which we live, for "we cannot be saved in ignorance" (D&C 131:6).

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"It is important that you young men and you young women get all the education that you can. The Lord has said very plainly that His people are to gain knowledge of countries and kingdoms and of things of the world through the process of education, even by study and by faith. It is worth sacrificing for. It is worth working at, and if you educate your mind and your hands, you will be able to make a great contribution to the society of which you are a part, and you will be able to reflect honorably on the Church of which you are a member. My dear young brothers and sisters, take advantage of every educational opportunity that you can possibly afford, and you father and mothers, encourage your sons and daughter to gain an education which will bless their lives." ("Inspirational Thoughts," in *Ensign*, June 1999, 4).

\*What opportunities do we have for formal education?

We have public education through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We have trade schools, junior colleges, and universities. If we are willing to apply ourselves and make sacrifices, the opportunities for higher education are available.

\*How does formal education benefit our lives?

It better prepares us to face the world of the future where the need for advanced education and training is becoming more important. In order to be successful learners, we also learn discipline, to work hard, persistence, and perseverance. It also helps to expand our horizons and to see the world more clearly.

\*What can we do to make better use of our opportunities for formal education?

There is an ever-increasing number of distractions that compete for our time and energy. It requires us to set our goals on those things that matter, rather than wasting our time with that which has little value or meaning. As we discipline ourselves to focus on what is important, we will be able to gain the skills and education that will prepare us for tomorrow: jobs, family, and, service.

Brigham Young states,

"Our education should be such as to improve our minds and fit us for increased usefulness; to make us of greater service to the human family" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*. Selected and Arranged by John A. Widtsoe. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954, [1961], 255).

\*How can education help us to serve our families?

We can be an example to them of individual dedication and perseverance in achieving a worthwhile goal. Education helps to gain a good job so that we can better provide for our families. Through our education, we will be better prepared to assist our children with the challenges they face.

\*How can education help us to serve others?

In the process of gaining an education, we learn important skills that can help us in serving others. The ability to problem solve, to live on a budget, to set goals and work toward their fulfillment, are skills that can be used to assist others.

\*How can education help us in our efforts to help build the kingdom?

The more we know and understand the better we will be to interact and understand others. Having sufficient to meet our needs can free us to then give our time and energy in helping others.

Doctrine and Covenants 90:15

**15 And set in order the churches, and study and learn and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people.**

\*How has your study been enriched by the study of good books?

I grew up in a small rural town in Northern Utah. I knew little about the world and people beyond my own small community. The reading of good books helped me to understand the lives of others, the challenges they had faced and overcome. It gave me a knowledge of other people and our similarities. We may be separated by distance and languages, but we are all Heavenly Father's children with similar desires and aspirations.

Doctrine and Covenants 68:25-28

**25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.**

**26 For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized.**

**27 And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands.**

**28 And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.**

\*What does this scripture teach us about parent's responsibility to teach their children?

We learn parents are primarily responsible to teach their children the first principles of the Gospel, and to prepare them for baptism at the age of eight years, upon the

penalty of bringing sin upon themselves. They are also to teach their children to pray and to walk "uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:28). It is not enough to see that their children attend their Church meetings. The parents themselves have a personal duty before the Lord to teach their children.

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"Parents should also teach practical skills such as how to maintain good health, work diligently, get along with others, manage money, and get a good education." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 130).

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"You know that your children will read. They will read books and they will read magazines... Cultivate within them a taste for the best. While they are very young, read to them the great stories which have become immortal because of the virtues they teach. Expose them to good books. Let there be a corner somewhere in your house, be it ever so small, where they will see at least a few books of the kind upon which great minds have been nourished" ("Opposing Evil," in *Ensign*, November 1975, 39).

This counsel, given by Gordon B. Hinckley in 1975, is even more important in the day of computers, cell phones, and video games. As we involve our children in reading a good book, as strange as that may seem to them, we will be doing them a great service in introducing them to the great literature of the world.

Thomas S. Monson states,

"A...hallmark of a happy home is discovered when home is a library of learning...The Lord counseled, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith' (D&C 88:118). The standard works offer the library of learning of which I speak. We must be careful not to underestimate the capacity of children to read and to understand the word of God" ("Hallmarks of a Happy Home," in *Ensign*, November 1988, 70).

\*What kinds of reading should we avoid?

We should avoid the mundane or the sensational. Like our friends, we should choose wisely the literature that we put into our minds. Some is degrading, rather than uplifting; this we should avoid like the plague, regardless of its' worldly popularity.

Ezra Taft Benson counseled,

"Today, with the abundance of books available, it is the mark of a truly educated man to know what not to read...Feed only on the best. As John Wesley's mother counseled him: 'Avoid whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, takes off your relish for spiritual things,...increase the authority of the body over the mind" ("In His Steps," in *1979 Devotional Speeches of the Year*. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980, 61).

\*In addition to obtaining a formal education and reading good books, what can we do to continue learning throughout our lives?

We can take educational classes on-line. We can become involved in tracing our ancestors, learning about the lands and conditions in which they lived, and then doing their temple work for them. We can write our own life history focusing on the lessons we have learned that would be of benefit to our children. We can volunteer at the public school and assist the children who may benefit from some extra help. Volunteering may help us to learn new things, and will also bless the lives of others.

#### **V. In the Temple We Gain an Education for Eternity**

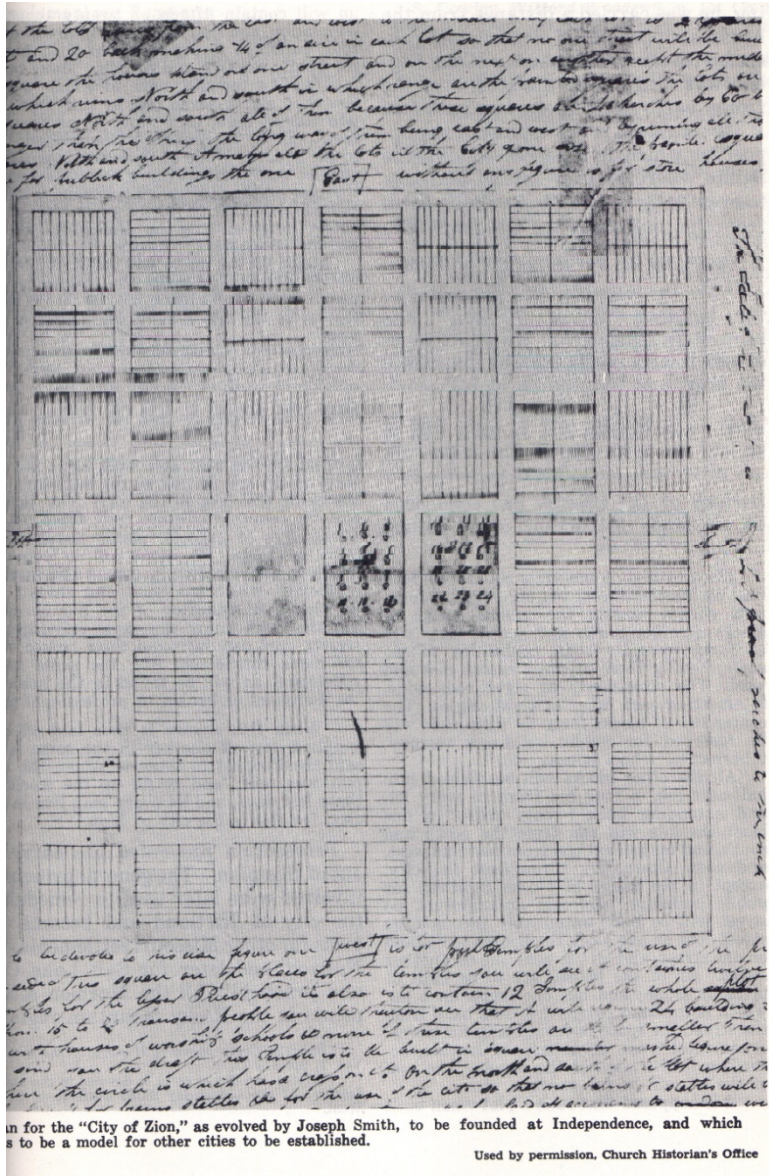
On June 25, 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith sent a plat for the construction of the city of Zion, to the Saints in Independence, Missouri. The Temple was to be in the center of the city, with homes to be set out from it.

B.H. Roberts states,

"In June the Prophet sent to Zion [Missouri] the plat of the city to be founded at Independence, which was to be a model for the rest, and which a few years later became the

plan on which Kirtland was laid out. [A copy of the Plan for the "City of Zion," as evolved to Joseph Smith, to be found at Independence, and which was to be the model for other cities to be established is enclosed. See following, Figure 1. Plan for the "City of Zion" ].

**Figure 1: Plan for the "City of Zion"**



Reference: (William Edwin Barrett. *The Restored Church*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1961, [Fourteenth Edition-1969], 91).



"The following description is condensed from the elaborate instructions of the Prophet sent to the bishop in Zion upon this subject:

#### ZION, THE CITY PLAT

"The city plat is one mile square, divided into blocks containing ten acres each--forty rods square--except the middle range of blocks running north and south; they will be forty by sixty rods, containing fifteen acres, having their greatest extent east and west. The streets will be eight rods wide, intersecting each other at right angles. The center tier of blocks forty by sixty rods will be reserved for public buildings, temples, tabernacles, school houses, etc.

"All other blocks will be divided into half-acre lots, a four rod front to ever lot, and extending back twenty rods. In one block the lots will run from the north and south, and in the next one from east and west, and so on alternately throughout the city, except in the range of blocks reserved for public buildings. By this arrangement no street will be built on entirely through the street; but on one block the houses will stand on one street and on the next one on another street. Al the houses are to be built of brick or stone; and but one house on a lot, which is to stand twenty-five feet back from the street, the space in front being for lawns, ornamental trees, shrubbery, or flowers according to the taste of the owners; the rest of the lot will be for gardens, etc.

"It is supposed that such a plat when built up will contain fifteen or twenty thousand population, and they will require twenty-four buildings to supply them with houses of public worship and schools. Those buildings will be temples, none of which will be less than eighty-seven feet, making the building twenty-eight feet to the square. None of these temples will be smaller that the drawing of the one sent with the plat of the city to Independence; but of course there may be others much larger: the above, however, are the dimensions of the one the saints were commanded to build first.

"Lands on the north and south of the city will be laid off for barns and stables for the use of the city, so there

will be no barns or stables in the city among the homes of the people.

"Lands for agriculturalists sufficient for the whole plat are also laid off on the north and south of the city plat, but if sufficient land cannot be laid off without going to great a distance, then farms are to be laid off on the east and west also; but the tiller of the soil as well as the merchant and mechanic will live in the city. The farmer and his family, therefore, will enjoy all the advantages of schools, public lectures and other meetings. His home will no longer be isolated, and his family denied the benefits of society, which has been, and always will be, the great educator of the human race; but will they will enjoy the same privileges of society, and can surround their homes with the same intellectual life, the same social refinement as will be found in the home of the merchant or banker or professional man.

"When this square is thus laid off and supplied, lay off another in the same way," said the Prophet to those to whom the city plan was sent, 'and so fill up the world in these last days, and let every man live in the city, for this is the city of Zion.

"Before these plan for building the initial city of Zion and the first temple [in Independence]--plans for the construction of which accompanied the plat of the city--could be carried into effect, that cruel persecution began which ended in the expulsion of the saints frmm Jackson county." (*A Comprehensive History of the Church, Century One*, Vol. 1. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965, [Reprinted 1977], 311-312.

When the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, one of the first things Brigham Young did was to select the site of the Temple to be built in Salt Lake.

Brigham Young stated five years after he had designated the exact site of the Salt Lake Temple,

"I scarcely ever say much about revelations, or visions, but suffice it to say, five years ago last July, I was here, and saw in the spirit the temple not ten feet from where we have laid

the chief cornerstone. I have not inquired what kind of temple we should build. Why? Because it was represented before me. I have never looked upon that ground, but the vision of it was there. I see it as plainly as if was in reality before me... It will have six towers, to begin with, instead of one...' Five years ago when 'we were on this ground looking for a location, sending our scouting parties through the country, to the right and to the left, to the north and to the south, to the east and the west; before we had any returns from any of them, I knew, just as well as I know now, that this was the ground on which to erect a temple...it was before me." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*. Selected and Arranged by John A. Widtsoe. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954, [1961], 629-630).

Carter E. Grant states,

"The brethren then voted to lay out the city in ten acre blocks, with eight-rod streets, running at right angles, beginning at the Temple Square. This new city of Zion was to follow the general pattern that the Prophet Joseph Smith had received by revelation for the New Jerusalem, which was yet to be built at Independence, Missouri.

"[Kirtland], Far West, Nauvoo, Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo, Brigham and many other cities built by the Mormons, follow the pattern given to the Prophet--but not in detail as will be the 'Model City' to be built at Jackson County, Missouri." (*The Kingdom of God Restored*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1955, 433, Footnote #16).

\*What can we learn from the plan to build a temple at the center of the city of Zion?

The Holy Temple is the center of learning for members of the Church. Locating the temple in the center of the city, is a visual reminder that the temple should also be at the center of our lives. It is in the Temple of the Lord that we receive the ordinances that will enable us as individuals and families to return to our Heavenly Father. It has also been referred to as "the University of the Lord." Here we are taught by the Lord the essential principles of eternal life.

**119 Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;**

\*As we think about the temple as a "house of learning," in what ways does the Lord teach us when we attend the temple?

Many of the important lessons we learn in the temple are taught through the use of symbols. This method is valuable for the meaning of the particular symbol is only revealed as the individual seeks inspiration. In order for us to understand the lessons of the Lord, we must, therefore, seek insight regarding the meaning of the symbols. In this manner, through personal revelation, the Lord enlightens our minds as to the sacred lessons He would have us understand.

\*What can we do to receive the knowledge available in the temple?

Prior to our entering the temple, we can inquire, in humble prayer, for the Lord to enlighten our minds regarding the lesson He would have us learn on that occasion. As we listen carefully for the whispering of the Spirit during our time in the temple, we will be taught what we need to learn. Each time we attend the temple, as we continue to petition the Lord for understanding and insight, He will continue to enlighten our minds.

John A. Widtsoe states,

*"The temple is a place of instruction. Here the principles of the gospel are reviewed and profound truths of the kingdom of God are unfolded. If we enter the temple in the right spirit and are attentive, we go out enriched in gospel knowledge and wisdom." ("Looking Toward the Temple," in *Ensign*, January 1972, 56-57).*

The key words are "right spirit and are attentive." We determine for ourselves the degree of instruction and inspiration we receive by our level of our preparation. Some will gain much, others less. Whatever the level of our

current understanding, it is important that we continue to attend temple as often as we are able and as we do so, our understanding will be increased.

Boyd K. Packer states,

"The temple is a great school. It is a house of learning. In the temples the atmosphere is maintained so that it is ideal for instruction in matters that are deeply spiritual..

"The temple ceremony will not be fully understood at first experience. It will only be partly understood. Return again and again and again. Return to learn. Things that have troubled you or things that have been puzzling or things that have been mysterious will become known to you. Many of them will be the quiet, personal things that you really cannot explain to anyone else. But to you they are things known...

"So look toward the temple. Point your children toward the temple. From the days of their infancy, direct their attention to it, and begin their preparation for the day when they may enter the holy temple.

"In the meantime, be teachable yourself, be reverent. Drink deeply from the teachings--the symbolic, deeply spiritual teachings--available only in the temple" (*The Holy Temple* [pamphlet, 1982], 6-8).

\*What can we do to help our children to prepare to attend the temple?

Here are some suggestions that have been helpful for our family: (1) We had a picture of the temple displayed in a prominent place in our home so that all can see and be reminded of its importance; (2) We shared with our children regarding our marriage or sealing in the temple and what a wonderful, but sacred experience, it was for us as we began our lives together; and, (3) We took our children to two different Open Houses of temples, that occur prior to the dedication of a new temple. During this time, all are invited to view the temple. All ages, All people, including those not of the Latter-day Saint/Mormon faith.

One couple shared with us how they had taken their children to the grounds of the temple. While there, each of their

children had the opportunity to go up and touch the walls of the temple. This gave each of their children, a personal, hands-on experience with the temple, that made an lasting impression.

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"...return to the temple often to receive the personal blessings that come from regular temple worship. [Here] prayers are answered, revelation occurs, and instruction by the Spirit takes place in the holy temples of the Lord." ("Come Unto Christ, And Be Perfected In Him," in *Ensign*, May 1988, 85).

## **VI. Conclusions**

We began our lesson with how one individual as a child learned the importance of receiving a higher education. Education is important to the Lord and he expects us to gain knowledge and wisdom in a multitude of areas. Primary to the gaining of knowledge is that we build our learning upon a foundation of faith.

**The School of the Prophets Provides a Pattern for Us to Follow in Our Learning:** Early in the history of the Church, the Lord directed the Prophet to organize a school where they could be taught the doctrine of the gospel, and the affairs of the Church, that they would be prepared for church leadership and missionary service. The intimate setting was designed to further the receiving of spiritual experiences.

**We should learn "by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118):** Our study and learning is enhanced when it is built upon a firm foundation of faith and testimony. Without a strong testimony, one can be negatively impacted by the philosophies of man when they oppose the truths found in the teachings of Prophets and Apostles. Satan will uses the false teachings of man in order to give some an exaggerated opinion of their own learning to the extent they discount the wisdom of God. As we seek to obtain knowledge, we must contrast it with the teachings of the gospel. The Book of Mormon reminds us that "to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsel of God" (B/M, 2 Nephi 9:29).

**We Should Continue to Learn Throughout Our Lives:** We sought to group nine scriptures from the Doctrine and Covenants under three questions: (1) Why should we learn?; (2) What should we learn?; and, (3) How can we learn? Through revelation given by the Lord, we were able to answer each of these three questions based upon the Lord's revelations. As we increase in knowledge, understanding, and faith, our ability to serve our families and others increases.

We learned that we as parents have the primary responsibility from the Lord to teach our children the principles of the gospel as well as to pray and walk uprightly before the Lord. Many falsely believe that this is the responsibility of the Church, when in truth, this responsibility rests primarily upon the parents. While the Church supports the family in gospel instruction, it is in the home where the gospel is taught in word and example.

**In the Temple We Gain an Education for Eternity:** In the plan for the City of Zion to be built in Independence, Missouri, the Temple was to be located in the center of the city. As we center our focus upon the Temple, we are taught the lessons of eternity. It is here that the family is bound together in faith and obedience, and learn that marriages are for eternity. It is in the temple, that we draw closer to God in truth and faith.

In our next lesson [D&C#24], we learn how Satan uses deception to mislead the members of Christ's Church, and draw them into his service. We will also learn how we can avoid his deception and be faithful.

