

## **Learn by Study and Also by Faith**

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Today I thought we'd talk a little about why you're here and what it might be good for you to accomplish while you're at LDS Business College. Do you know that there are about 47,000 young people that are in Church schools, if you look at the three BYUs and LDS Business College? That equates to about twelve percent of the total youth in the Church, which leads to the question of why you are blessed to be here. (CES admissions statistics) Does it mean that you are smarter? Does it mean that you're more worthy? Does it mean that somehow you are more loved by heaven than other students? I don't think so. I think that there is something else that would indicate the reason that you're here and what it is you should be accomplishing during your time at LDS Business College. I think it has something to do with the scripture in Doctrine and Covenants section 88, where it admonishes us, and you particularly, to seek learning by study and by faith. (v. 118) I would like to talk a little about that today.

What you and I know, in terms of what there is to know, is relatively little. You've learned a lot of things since you've been here, but in reality you know very little, and I know very little. The Lord calls us children for a reason. We have about that level of understanding when it comes to things that we should know. "Behold," He says, "ye are little children and ye cannot bear all things now; ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth." (D&C 50:40)

Paul told the Corinthians that they should not be children in understanding. So how do we grow past being a child in understanding? How do we grow to become men and women of understanding. (See 1 Corinthians 14:20) Those questions have many answers, but part is to change the way we study and learn.

There was a student who was a graduate student at M.I.T., and during the summer months he went out every day during the three-month period of summer, wearing a black-and-white striped shirt, carrying a whistle and a bag of birdseed. He would go out on the football field at Harvard and spread birdseed around and then blow his whistle. After a while, the birds realized that when he blew the whistle it was time for them to come and get their birdseed. At the first game of the year, the referee walked onto the field and blew his whistle and a flock of birds descended on the field. It took a while to convince them to leave the area. Those birds had been conditioned to think about getting fed a certain way. By the way, the M.I.T. student used that experiment for his thesis, and graduated.

What I'd like to have you do today is suspend your conditioning, the way you normally think about study and learning, and to think about it in new ways.

The Lord said, “Study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books.” (D&C 90:15) *All good books.* Paul said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed.” (2 Timothy 2:15) Doesn’t that sound similar to what President Hinckley said when he talked to the youth of the Church? He said, “Be smart. The Lord wants you to educate your minds and hands, whatever your chosen field, whether it be repairing refrigerators or the work of a skilled surgeon. You must train yourself. Seek for the best schooling available. Become a workman of integrity in the world that lies ahead of you. I repeat, you will bring honor to the Church, and you will be generously blessed because of that training. There can be no doubt, none whatever, that education pays. Do not short-circuit your lives. If you do so, you will pay for it over and over and over again.” (The New Era, January 2001, 10) Wise counsel.

Sometimes we look at education as what we need to do to pass the next exam or complete the next assignment. Your education sometimes is reduced to almost a checklist mentality—done that, completed that, turned that in—and you forget in the process to actually learn. All students have to worry about what’s on the final exam, but if you’re not studying well, you cannot learn the things the Lord would have you to learn. Some believe that the Lord is interested only in our religious education. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord outlined that we should learn theories, principles, doctrines, the law of the gospel, things that pertain to the kingdom of God, astronomy, earth sciences, history, current events, domestic and foreign affairs, military warfare, government and administration, that, He said, you “may be prepared in all things when I shall send you [out from this college] to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.” (See D&C 88:78-80)

Do you have a mission? Do you have a calling? Is the Lord intending for you to use your education to do something? Is there more to your being here than just happenstance? Do you have something to contribute to the world? Is there a place, a role, for you that will have an impact for good in the world? I suggest that there is, and that part of what constitutes your education is the process of figuring out what that contribution needs to be.

I talked to a couple of students this morning, and asked them why they came to the College. Their answer was, “I felt inspired.” We hear that a lot. If you are then inspired to be here, or if circumstances bring you here for whatever reason, is there not then the following corollary that there is something for you to do? This is not just about you getting a job. This is not just about you meeting somebody and maybe getting married. There is more to this experience, and to your experience at college, than those things. And again, part of that is finding out your particular contribution.

So how do we do that? How do we learn, as the Lord said, “by study and also by faith”? We have some great examples that will give us a framework. One that you’re very familiar with is Oliver Cowdery. You remember he wanted to translate the plates, started well, didn’t continue as he started, and the Lord gave him some great counsel that I’d like us to look at. He said in the Doctrine and Covenants, “You must study it out in your

mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.” (D&C 9:8) Look at those three words; let’s focus on those three things to do—study, ask, and feel.

### **Study It Out**

The dictionary defines study as “meditate, reflect, endeavor, try.” There’s a difference between completing an assignment and studying in that sense. A true study is one that looks for application. What does this mean to me? How does this affect me? How can I apply it? What is this piece of information useful for, in terms of rounding out my education?

One day I sat in the back of a class in this room that Larry Richards taught. He was discussing some concepts and when he finished he said, “Now what does it mean? How do we apply this statement?” Three or four students raised their hands and repeated back to Brother Richards the things that he had said to them. He was gracious; he said, “Yes, that’s what I said, but that’s not what I’m asking. I’m asking, how does this apply? What is the application?” I would propose that those are the same kinds of questions you ought to ask yourself as you study. What’s the application? How does it affect me? What can I use from this information to make my contribution?

To “study it out in your mind” is hard work. There are many ways to study that are not measure solely by the time you spend with your books. In many cases, you need to replace old ways with more effective skills. You can, and I suggest you should, learn how to study better. The internet has some wonderful sites to help improve your study habits. (One site is <http://www.coun.uvie.ca/learn/hndouts.html>) The Learning Assistance Lab on campus is another great resource.

My first semester in college I was getting Bs and feeling pretty good about myself. Here I was, this hick kid from Montana, at BYU and doing okay. I remember one evening I was with the girl I would later marry and we were some place studying. We were dating then, and I decided to impress her. I said something like—“Yeah, I’m getting a B in this class,” which was my way of saying I was pretty good stuff. She was not impressed. You need to know that my wife is extremely bright, a straight A student. So she’s sitting with me, and we’re studying, and I’m saying how great I am for getting Bs, and she says, “Oh, that’s nice.” I started to realize that she wasn’t terribly impressed by my grades. After a pause, she said, “Are you happy with Bs?” I remember thinking, “Well, I used to be.”

Suddenly, my Bs didn’t look so good. I started to watch her, to learn how she studied. She studied in a way I had not considered, and the more I watched and copied her style, the better my grades became. It dawned on me that learning to learn is a continual process.

It’s always been interesting to me that the students who take advantage of the Learning Assistance Lab are, by and large, A and B students. They go to the lab because they are

looking for ways to improve their learning capacity. Make the study of learning one of your endeavors. It will bring great dividends.

We had a student a number of years ago that, unfortunately, we had to ask to leave campus because her grades were so low. I remember tears rolling down her face as she expressed sorrow at not having done what she wanted to do. She and I had discussed her grades a year before, so I said to her, “What have you done differently to improve your grades? What did you change?” She said she had spent more time doing what she had done before. While the increased time she spent was commendable, she had simply spent more time doing what had not worked before. In mathematics, any number multiplied by zero is still zero. If your study habits are not bringing an increase return, then look for new study habits. The Lord said, “You must study it out in your mind” and seek diligently “out of the best books words of wisdom.” (D&C 88:118)

### **Ask If It Is Right**

The second step in the three-step process is to ask. The Lord repeatedly commands us to ask Him. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5) *Upbraideth not* means He won’t make you feel dumb for asking questions.

Think of the story of the brother of Jared. He goes up on the mount, and the Lord tells him to build some barges, and go across the great deep to a new place. The brother of Jared sees two problems: it’s going to be really dark in the barges, and they’re going to suffocate. The Lord provides an answer for the suffocation problem. He tells him to cut a hole in the top and bottom, and, when you need air, open the hole. If water comes in, close the hole. I suppose that’s part of the reason why the door in the bottom was there. They can open the hole and let the water run out. (See Ether 2:19-21)

But about the light problem, the Lord does an interesting thing. Have you ever wondered why He did this? He tells the brother of Jared that they can’t have windows, because windows would get dashed to pieces. They also can’t have fire. In essence, the Lord gives him parameters and then says, “Go figure it out for yourself.” (See Ether 2:22-25)

So the brother of Jared goes down from the mountain, he thinks for a while, and comes up with an idea. He “molts out of rock sixteen stones” that are transparent, like glass. Then he installed boxes in the barges to hold the stones. He had great confidence in and was committed to this idea. Then he carried his stones to the top of the mountain, lays them out, and prays. He says, in essence, “I know that you’re smarter than I am. I know this is probably not the best idea. But it’s the best I can think of, and the command is that I should ask. So I’m asking. Would you please touch the stones so that they shine?” (See Ether 3:1-5)

And what does the Lord say? He says, “That is the dumbest idea I have ever heard in my life.” Does He say that? No, He doesn’t. What does He do? He reaches out and touches the stones. When you go to the Lord to ask a question is He going to say, “That’s the dumbest idea I’ve ever heard. Why can’t you be smarter? I’ve invested all this money in

your education and you'd think you would know more." He doesn't say that. He never says that. He does not upbraid, because He wants us to ask. That is not to say that He does not correct. If you're fortunate, you will feel His correction from time to time. It usually comes as a rebuke, mingled with love. But that's not the same as being upbraided. When the Lord corrects you, you feel a sense of increased ability. You feel more confident because you know the Lord will bless you. So we ask.

Now, let me give you an illustration that I hope will make the point. When I was young, they used to have dot-to-dot books. You know the kind, where you connect the dots to make a picture. Well, I brought a dot-to-dot exercise for you. Look at this dot-to-dot and tell me what you see. Tell me if you can see the picture I want you to see.

No? Let me help you. What I want to point out is that some dots are less important. Let's fade those away to focus on the dots that are more important. Are there things that are more important in your studies? Are there things that matter more, or matter less, as you sort through things and try to understand?

Sometimes it's helpful, when you're not sure what you're trying to draw, to know where to start. So let me help you out. Let me show you where we start on this particular picture. Many times if you know the beginning, it gives you a framework to build on. Can you see it yet?

Well, sometimes if you see the start, it's very helpful to know where you're going, to see the end. So let's show you the end from the beginning. And you'll begin, maybe, to see what it is that you should be seeing. It's the Big Dipper.

Now, I strained a bit at the analogy, but the point is the same. As you study, there are dots that are more important than others. It's helpful to know where you start. It's also very helpful to know where you're headed—again, this idea of understanding your contribution to the world. We ask that we might understand the dots, and the way we get the answers is usually a dot at a time. The Lord calls it "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." (2 Nephi 28:30) He'll show you glimpses so that you can begin to connect the dots. Rarely does He show you the entire picture at once. Why? It's the process of learning to connect the dots in a celestial context that constitutes learning. So the Lord lets us struggle along until we finally see.

Now, is this the end? Once we see the picture are we done? What does this picture of the Big Dipper do for us? What does it do? It points to the North Star. What does the North Star do? Well, for centuries it has been the compass, the guiding light. Through the ages, many have plotted their course by the North Star. It's constant and unchanging. So, is that the end of it? Is that all there is to learn about the Big Dipper?

Well, let me show you one more slide. Have you ever wondered why, on the west center tower of the Salt Lake Temple, you can find the constellation of the Big Dipper? I wonder why? Is there more to learn? I'll leave that for you to think on. Learning is a discovery that takes you deeper and deeper. As you pay the price to understand, to see

new pictures, you come to “own” the information. It becomes personal, a part of you. In going from dot to dot, letting the Lord lead you, you will find that your learning shapes who you are. It helps define your contribution.

We have great examples of that learning. Joseph F. Smith was an old man when he received the revelation recorded in D&C 138. It came after a lifetime of pondering and thinking. President Spencer W. Kimball struggled for many years about what to do about worthy men of the Church who did not have the opportunity to hold the priesthood. It was a marvelous day when the revelation on the priesthood was received. President Gordon B. Hinckley struggled for years to discover a way to bring more temples to the people. He worried about it. He thought about it. He studied it. Finally, the inspiration came. It is after we study, after we ask, after we ponder, that we see the connections between the dots.

### **Feel In Your Heart**

The Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 8, verse 2: “Behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.”

How did Moses know to part the Red Sea? Did an angel come down and speak to him? Is that how it happened? The Lord said He told him in his mind and in his heart. He felt it. That gives me great admiration for Moses. How many times have I thought and felt things but didn’t have the faith to do. Here’s Moses, a great man, who needed no angel, no direct voice. He felt in his mind and heart. He had come to the point where he understood how feeling and revelation go hand in hand, and he went out and struck the water. But he studied and asked and felt.

The Lord promised: “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.... Therefore, he that lacketh wisdom, let him ask of me, and I will give him liberally and upbraid him not.” (D&C 42:61, 68)

Have you ever felt joy at learning something? Has there been a leap in your heart, an excitement? What would you say, then, is the basis for that? Is that the Holy Ghost working in your heart, to help you understand a concept? Are you beginning to feel things?

One more scripture to help us understand. If we compare learning to a seed and plant that seed in our hearts, “behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when ye feel these swelling motions, you will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed.” Does that work for economics, critical thinking, persuasion or speech? It must be a good seed. I feel this swelling motion. Things are growing in my heart. “For it beginneth to enlarge my soul;

yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.” (Alma 32:28) A great description of learning.

Now, do we have, again, examples of learning by study and by faith? Moses looked on the world upon which he was created and “beheld the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered.” (Moses 1:8) And Moses said, “I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him.” (Moses 1:18)

Did Moses learn by study and by faith? Did Moses know a little bit about earth science? How long was Moses up in the mount? Forty days, forty nights. Did Moses write everything that he saw? No, he did not. How did Moses learn about the creation of the world? By study and faith.

Nephi said he “went into the mount oft, and did pray unto the Lord wherefore the Lord showed unto him great things. (See 1 Nephi 18:3)

Now you may say, “I’m not a prophet. I don’t receive revelations.” Doctrine and Covenants 11:25 says: “Deny not the spirit of revelation, nor the spirit of prophecy, for wo unto him that denieth these things.”

Deny means to disclaim connection with or responsibility for. We deny revelation when we say “I can’t get it.” We deny revelation when we say, “It’s not my responsibility to get it.” The Lord is saying it is your responsibility to receive revelation appropriate for you. Study. Learn by faith.

The Lord will bless you with insight, with wisdom, with power and with influence. Again, from the Doctrine and Covenants: “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by...the priesthood, only by”—and He gives a long list, and one of the last things he says—“by kindness and pure knowledge.” Pure knowledge. And what will pure knowledge do? “Greatly enlarge thy soul.” (vv. 41-42)

### **Apply Your Knowledge**

Once you gain knowledge by study and by faith, you’re ready for the next part. You have to do something with it. You must become a blessing. And here, I think is the bottom line, the crux of the matter. It is, in part, why it is you are here, and what the Lord expects of you. He, I believe, expects you to learn all that you can by study and by faith, that you might be a blessing to the world.

One last point. Abraham said, “And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of

God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.”  
(Abraham 1:2)

I think it’s interesting that Abraham combines learning and righteousness in the same phrases. Every time, he puts the two together. He sees learning by study and also by faith.

We live in perilous times. The world needs lights. We need stars. We need guides—people in all walks of life who are bright, who have understanding that combines learning with faith. What will be your contribution?

There is much left to learn, much left to be contributed in all disciplines. Why should you not be the one to make the contribution? Why should you not be the one to take us to a new level, as a city, as a state, as a church, as a world? We limit ourselves if we think too small. There is, at this institution, the solutions to tomorrow’s challenges. Will you pay the price to understand and learn—from your books, from each other, from your faculty, and from heaven? The degree to which you are successful will be the degree to which you bless your families, your communities and the world.

My hope is that you will study, ponder and pray, that you’ll learn how to learn, and that you’ll find out what the Lord expects of you and apply it. The Lord was speaking to you when He said, “Verily, I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations.” (D&C 115:5)