

TEACHING THE GOSPEL EFFECTIVELY
A teaching method

Opening the way for the Holy Spirit to do much of the teaching

From a lesson taught by Elder Schmuhl in the MTC.
Principles and precepts extracted by Robert Fitt.

Principle: The Lord does not discriminate between his children; but allows the influence of the Holy Spirit to be with everyone equally in any situation where the truth is being taught.

Precepts:

- Whenever a servant of the Lord feels the Spirit, he may be sure that everyone else present with him feels that same spirit, though the intensity of the manifestation will be greater or lesser depending upon the receptivity of the hearer. (*See Alma 7:17*)
- When a servant of the Lord feels the Spirit, he can help others identify the Spirit by calling their attention to their feelings. (*"What are you feeling at this moment?"*)
- After identifying their feelings of peace, confidence and serenity as manifestations of the Spirit of God, the servant of the Lord should teach them that God is helping them to understand that they are:
 - Hearing the truth: (*What are your feelings telling you?*), and
 - That they are obligated to act upon it: (*What does God expect you to do about it?*)
- Revelation takes place whenever the Spirit is present; and its recipients should be taught to listen for the truths being taught by the Spirit.
- The more often the servant of the Lord identifies the Spirit for others, the easier it becomes to do.
- The scriptures point to the Savior, and, therefore, to prayer. It is through prayer that the servant of the Lord, and others, gain an understanding (through the Spirit) of what it is that the Lord requires of them.

Principle: When we sincerely ask God for guidance He will always answer us.

Precepts:

- The intensity of feeling, the length of time required, and our ability to discern the answer to our prayer will vary; but the answer always comes if our intentions are right, and if we "ask in faith, nothing wavering."
 - This must be so if we believe in a loving Father who does not discriminate between his children. [See Moroni 10:3-5; James 1:5-7]
- Whenever an answer is needed, or if there is a difference of opinion, invite the questioner to pray about it. If the questioner will ask a 'yes' or 'no' question of the Lord, the non-attender will discover who, or what, is right.
 - *(Example: "I'm teaching you something and you disagree. How can you discover the truth?" [pray!])*
- When praying for answers, it is important for the seeker to ask 'yes' or 'no' questions so that he can more easily understand the answer he receives from God.
- He recognizes the answer by discerning how he feels once the question has been asked.
- Possible answers may be identified as good feelings and bad feelings.
 - Good feelings, such as peace, serenity, and confidence) mean "yes".
 - Bad feelings: Lack of peace, such as a stupor, agitation or confusion mean "No".
 - The absence of a bad feeling is a good feeling and means that we should act in a way that is consistent with Christ's teachings. As we proceed--on faith--he will warn us along the way with troubled or uneasy feelings if we take a wrong turn.
- Scripture is helpful; but our understanding of its teachings must be based upon what the Lord teaches through the Spirit, rather than

being 'proven' by man's logic or wisdom; lest the investigator gains a testimony of the scriptures that may subsequently be disproved by other seemingly more logical interpretations.

AN APPROACH TO ACTIVATION THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Establish a helpful relationship with the non-attender

Discover when it was that the non-attender was active and attending Church.

Ask: *"How did you feel when you were active and participating?"* [Good feelings]

"Would you like to feel that way again?" [yes]

"What were you doing at that time that made you feel so good?" [Prayer, scripture study, service, Church attendance]

"Are you still doing those things?" [no]

Then ask:

"Do you think those feelings would return if you were to begin praying, reading the scriptures, and attending Church again?"

Should we try? Would you be willing to read the scriptures with me for a moment? If we do, perhaps His Spirit will return to help us. Let's Moroni 7:13-19) [It's worth a try.]

As you Read the scripture, and you feel the Spirit, ask:

"Tell me what you're feeling right now." [He may tell you what he is thinking instead. If he does, say: *"No, that's not what I'm asking. You're telling me what you're thinking. Tell me what you're feeling—in here--deep inside."*

He will probably answer:

"I feel Good."

You should then ask:

"Can you describe those good feelings for me?" [If he has trouble describing them, help him by suggesting the feelings of the Spirit]:

“Do you feel peace? Comfort? Love? Do you feel something of happiness, serenity, joy, confidence and wholeness?, etc.)

Then ask:

“Where do you think those feelings come from?” [“The Holy Ghost.”]

You should immediately confirm his answer, (*“That’s right”*) and ask a further question:

So what is the Spirit telling you?” [“He’s telling me that It’s true.”]

Add further confirmation:

“That’s exactly right. It is true!” It’s a pleasure to have those good feelings back for a moment, isn’t it?”

It will now be helpful to ask about his past experience:

“What is it that happened in your life that caused those good feelings to go away? [Hurt feelings? Your own carelessness or the carelessness of others?]

Answers will vary; but whatever his answer is, say:

“That’s a concern; but if God tells you to go back to Church despite how you feel, or what others do, will you do it?”

If he hesitates, invite him to pray for an answer to the question.

Since non-attenders are often inexperienced in asking the Lord for answers, It would be well to ask:

“What question would you ask God if you were to pray right now?”

He will probably have difficulty coming up with a question that will bring about an understandable response. If this happens, he should be taught to ask a simple 'yes' or 'no' question, such as.

“Do you want me to return to Church in spite of my feelings?”

Then teach him how to recognize the answer when it comes to him.

He recognizes the answer by discerning how he feels once the question has been asked.

- If you experience good feelings such as peace, serenity, confidence or joy, the answer is "yes".

- If you experience bad feelings, or a lack of peace, such as, agitation, confusion, or a stupor of thought, the answer is "No".
- If a clear, recognizable, answer does not come immediately. Urge him to continue to pray and that the Lord will respond in His own time and way. Meanwhile, he should act in a way that is consistent with his conscience and Christ's teachings. Assure him that if he will proceed—on faith—he will be warned along the way with troubled or uneasy feelings if he should begin to take a wrong turn.

He should then be taught to pause silently after his prayer to determine whether his feelings are peaceful or not, and then express his feelings after receiving his answer.

Invite the non-attender to kneel in prayer with you. Ask if he would feel comfortable to pray right now, while you're there to add your faith to his.

If the non-attender agrees, the servant of Christ should further explain that he will remain entirely silent until the non-attender shares his feelings with him, so that the non-attender may have all the time he needs to discern the answer.

Once the answer has been received, and the non-attender speaks once again, ask him to express his feelings.

If he expresses feelings of peace, confidence, joy and love, remind him that the Holy Ghost is always present when the truth is being taught, and that feelings of calm and peace are the Holy Spirit's way of confirming the truth to him.

If he isn't in touch with his feelings, and tells you what he thinks instead, give him some clues by saying something like: *"I'm feeling calm and peaceful at the moment, what are you feeling?"* And continue until he is able to identify his feelings, such as peace, confidence and serenity.

Once he recognizes that his feelings of peace are actually the Holy Ghost confirming the truth to him, help the non-attender discover what the Lord wants him to do by *asking*:

"What is the Holy Spirit telling you? What does the Lord want you do?"
 ["He's telling me to go back to Church."]

If that is his answer, quickly confirm the truth of his answer, and then ask: *"Will you do it? Will you do as the Lord suggests, and return to regular attendance at Church?"* [When the Spirit is present, the answer will most often be "yes"*.]

When the Spirit is present, the non-attender's decision to improve seems to be unwavering; but once the Spirit leaves, Satan is quick to help him rationalize away his experience. It then becomes easy to falter and fall back into old patterns of living. For this reason it is important to give him a lot of loving support for a period of time. The following suggestions may be of help:

- Offer to take him to Church the first few times. He may gladly accept; but if he tells you that he'll come on his own, offer to meet him in the foyer at a specific time. Either way, call some of the members in advance to let them know that you're bringing someone to Church. Ask them to welcome him.
- Offer your continuing friendship, and make frequent -- probably daily -- contact during this critical period of transition. Visit with him often, bringing the Spirit with you to reinforce and strengthen him. Maintain regular friendship until he is enabled to stand on his own testimony, attends Church regularly, and is actively serving in a calling.
- The non-attender may have difficulty recognizing what it is that he is feeling. If so, remind him that the absence of a bad feeling is a good feeling. This means that he should act in a way that is consistent with his conscience and with Christ's teachings. If he will do that, and proceed on faith, he can be assured that he will be warned along the way, (with troubled or uneasy feelings), if he should take a wrong turn.

AN APPROACH TO PROSELYTING THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

This is a script that has been used successfully to help investigators feel and recognize the Holy Spirit. Begin the discussion by asking the investigator to pay particular attention to his feelings. Tell him that he'll learn why later.

Begin the discussion with prayer, and continue to pray in your heart that the Spirit will be present.

Teach the discussion. At some point in the discussion the Spirit will enter.

As the Spirit enters, interrupt the normal flow of conversation and ask:

"Tell me what you're feeling right now?"

It is not uncommon for the investigator to tell you what he's thinking, instead of what he's feeling. If he should do that, say:

"You don't understand. You've told me what you're thinking. That isn't what I want to know; tell me what you're feeling (put your hand on your breast) instead."

If he has trouble getting in touch with his feelings, give him some clues by saying something like:

"I'm feeling calm and peaceful at the moment, what are you feeling?"

Then continue until he is able to separate his feelings, from his thinking.

After which, he will probably answer:

"I feel Good."

You should then ask:

"Can you describe those good feelings for me?" [If he has trouble describing them, help him by suggesting such words as peace, love, comfort, happy, serene, joy, confident, wholeness, etc.)

Then ask:

"Where do you think those feelings come from?" ["The Holy Ghost."]

Immediately confirm his answer,

"That's right. Your feelings are from the Holy Ghost."

Then ask a further question:

"So what is the Spirit telling you?" ["That what you're teaching me is true."]

Add further confirmation:

"That's exactly right. It is true!"

Then ask this question:

"Since the Lord has told you that what you're hearing is true, what do you feel that God expects you to do about it?"

He will probably answer:

"He expects me to be baptized", (or live the Word of wisdom, or pay tithing, or whatever principle you're teaching at the moment.)

Once the investigator knows what God expects of him, commit him to act upon his new knowledge by asking:

"Will you do it? Will you follow up on your decision?"

When the Spirit is present, he will usually answer:

"Yes."

If he hesitates, invite him to pray for an answer to the question.

Because many people have never asked the Lord for specific answers, they may not know the way to do it.

Teach the seeker to ask 'yes' or 'no' questions so that he can more easily understand the answer he receives from God.

Then teach him how to receive the answer when it comes to him.

He recognizes the answer by discerning how he feels once the question has been asked.

- If you experience good feelings such as peace, serenity, confidence or joy, the answer is "yes".
- If you experience bad feelings, or a lack of peace, such as, agitation, confusion, or a stupor of thought, the answer is "No".
- The absence of a bad feeling is a good feeling and means that we should act in a way that is consistent with Christ's teachings. As we proceed--on faith--he will warn us along the way with troubled or uneasy feelings if we take a wrong turn.

Since investigators are often inexperienced in asking the Lord for answers, It would be well to ask:

"What question would you ask God if you were to pray right now?"

He will probably have difficulty coming up with a response that can be readily identified. If this happens, he should be taught to ask a simple 'yes' or 'no' question, such as.

"Do you want me to join the Church in spite of my feelings?"

He should then be taught to pause silently after his prayer to determine whether his feelings are peaceful or not, and then express his feelings after receiving his answer.

Invite the investigator to kneel in prayer with you. Ask if he would feel comfortable to pray right now, while you're there to add your faith to his.

If the investigator agrees, the servant of Christ should further explain that he will remain entirely silent until the investigator shares his feelings with him, so that the investigator may have all the time he needs to discern the answer.

Once the answer has been received, and the investigator speaks once again, ask him to express his feelings.

If he expresses feelings of peace, confidence, joy and love, remind him that the Holy Ghost is always present when the truth is being taught, and that feelings of calm and peace are the Holy Spirit's way of confirming the truth to him.

If he isn't in touch with his feelings, and tells you what he thinks instead, give him some clues by saying something like: *"I'm feeling calm and peaceful at the moment, what are you feeling?"* And continue until he is able to identify feelings of peace, confidence and serenity.

Once he recognizes that his feelings of peace are actually the Holy Ghost confirming the truth to him, then help the investigator discover what the Lord wants him to do by *asking*:

"What is the Holy Spirit telling you? What does the Lord want you do?"
["He's telling me to be baptized."]

If that is his answer, quickly confirm the truth of his answer, and then ask:
"Will you do it? Will you do as the Lord suggests, and be baptized?"
[When the Spirit is present, the answer will most often be "yes"*.]

When the Spirit is present, the investigator's decision seems to be sure and unwavering; but once the Spirit leaves, Satan is quick to help him rationalize away his experience. It then becomes easy to waver and fall back into old patterns of living. For this reason it is important to give the investigator a lot of loving support for a period of time. The following suggestions may be of help:

- Offer your continuing friendship, and make frequent -- probably daily -- contact during this critical period of transition. Visit with him often, bringing the Spirit with you to reinforce and strengthen him. Maintain regular friendshiping until he is baptized, confirmed, and becomes firm in his own testimony. Only when he attends Church regularly, and is actively serving in a calling, is it safe to lessen your efforts.
- Offer to take him to Church with you. If he accepts, notify some member friends that you're bringing someone to Church. Ask them to come at a specific time to welcome him warmly.