

# *Spiritual Education Is True Education*

GEORGE P. LEE

**P**resident Holland, faculty members and students, my dear brothers and sisters:

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude for the privilege and invitation to come down here and talk to the greatest student body in the whole world. Secondly, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude for the blessing of a great companion. I am grateful that Sister Lee was able to be with us today. I am also proud to have our two oldest boys, Duane and Chad, with us. They're looking forward to attending this fine university someday.

I sincerely invoke the strength of your faith and your prayers that what I say may be helpful to you and to me. I hope that whatever spiritual enlightenment we receive today will give us strength, courage, and the determination to carry on the work of the Lord, which is the greatest work in all the world.

This world is getting so competitive and technical that a high school degree is not sufficient anymore. Never in the history of mankind was it as necessary to be highly trained to achieve in a chosen field as it is at the present time. This period of time demands that you not only be technically trained, but spiritually trained as well. In fact, spiritual training should take priority at all times.

The scriptures make it very clear that you are to seek spiritual knowledge first, and then all else will be added unto you, including secular knowledge. As great and as important as secular knowledge is, as great and important as are the training of the mind and becoming specialists in our chosen occupations and vocations on this earth, this worldly knowledge and these achievements are not and should not be our greatest aims in life. You should know and realize that spiritual education is true education.

## **Secular Knowledge and Spiritual Knowledge**

Up to this point in your lives, you have had to deal mainly with secular education or education about our physical selves as well as our physical world. Our fine public school systems have dealt mainly with secular education, while spiritual education is usually left for the home and the church. Because we live in this kind of a world, it is only natural that proper emphasis be placed on secular education. At the same time, you should not allow this

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*George P. Lee was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 17 May 1983.*

secular education to mislead you as to the tremendous importance and value of spiritual education. Secular education is only a small part of spiritual education.

Both are important, but we ought to know and understand that spiritual education is to be supplemented with secular education. In other words, we must know and understand that the scriptures are to be supplemented with secular knowledge. Secular knowledge is not to be supplemented with the scriptures, but eternal truths must be supplemented with knowledge of languages, tongues, and peoples. You and I, in the search for secular knowledge, have built huge monuments and temples in the forms of great colleges and universities. We have built huge, expensive, elaborate facilities, laboratories, libraries, endowments, and equipment in our search for secular knowledge.

The search for spiritual knowledge, on the other hand, is quite a different matter. This search for eternal truths is for anyone and for everyone. In this search for spiritual truth, there is no need for extensive, elaborate universities, laboratories, libraries, or expensive equipment. The only things that are needed and necessary for this search are a pure heart and a contrite spirit. Even the lowliest of men can find this kind of truth. In this search for spiritual truth, there is no need for a chosen, trained profession, but only righteous living. Even the poorest and humblest may be a searcher for this spiritual knowledge.

### **True Education**

The Lord Jesus Christ has told us that he has never at any time given us a law which was temporal, for to him all things are spiritual (D&C 29:34–35). I sincerely believe that spiritual education is true education. True education is to learn more and more about the Father of our spirits, or our Heavenly Father. He is the Father of the spirits of all men everywhere, and he is also the literal, earthly Father of Jesus

Christ. True education is to know that each person is a child of God, created in his image, endowed with his attributes, and entitled to his inspiration. One of our greatest privileges in this earth life is to seek him and to become more like him.

A modern revelation says:

*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. [D&C 130:22]*

Our Heavenly Father who begot Jesus Christ is a person, and he has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as that possessed by Jesus Christ. It is in the same shape and form as our own bodies. God our Heavenly Father is not a shapeless mass filling the whole universe, yet so small that he dwells within a human heart. He is not without a body, parts, or passions. He is not permanently invisible; he is not joined into one with the Holy Ghost and Jesus Christ.

Can you imagine praying to a god who is an incomprehensible, shapeless, and invisible influence without body, parts, or passions? Can you imagine Jesus Christ praying to a god who is a shapeless mass? Can you imagine Jesus Christ praying to himself who is at the same time God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost all rolled into one? The fact that God our Heavenly Father is all-knowing and all-powerful, that his influence and knowledge can reach throughout space, does not mean that he himself has been diffused throughout space. God is not a thing; he is not an invisible influence; he is not a shapeless mass; he is not incomprehensible; and he is not an "it."

God the Father is a glorified, all-knowing, all-powerful, personal Being, as he has revealed himself to be. He is our Heavenly Father in whose image we were all created.

True education then is to seek and understand who you are and not only to know that

God lives, but also to know the kind of Being he is and what your relationship to him ought to be. True education is to know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is to know that this same Jesus who walked upon the waters, who healed the sick, who suffered in Gethsemane, who died upon the cross, came forth from the tomb and conquered death. True education is to literally and actually know through the Spirit that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he is the Savior of the world.

On one occasion a very important question was asked of a group of Pharisees when Jesus said to them, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). The Pharisees didn't have very many good answers.

I wonder how much better our own answer would be if the same question was asked of us today. After all that is a question that all of us must answer, either with our own voices or with our own lives. Sometimes our own voices indicate that we know the right answer, but the way we live indicates that we do not know the Christ.

Sometimes it is difficult for some of us to understand and believe something that we have not actually experienced. We are like Thomas. Some of us must put our fingers into the print of the nails and thrust our hand into his side before we can believe. How sad and unfortunate.

Peter had the right answer when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). What a tremendous spiritual education we would have if we would likewise know what Peter knew and say what Peter said.

In our own day Joseph Smith verified the existence of Christ by his own personal testimony that he saw our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ with his own eyes and testified that Jesus lives. He said, "I have actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me" (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

My own personal testimony is that Jesus Christ was not only a great teacher; he was not only a great educator, a great philosopher, and a great leader, but he was foreordained to be the Savior of the world. He voluntarily came down to earth to lay down his life for the salvation of men. He came to earth and taught all men, took their sins upon himself, and finally allowed his life to be taken to redeem mankind from the effects of the fall in the Garden of Eden. He is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh; he is the Redeemer of the world; he is the Christ.

True education is to know the true God and Jesus Christ. Only when we know these things can we ever hope to enter his presence once again. True education recognizes the priesthood of God as the only great, legal, supreme authority and power that governs all things at all times upon the earth, in the universe, and in the eternities. It is the only great, supreme authority and power that governs all the children of God upon all the worlds that have been, upon all the worlds that are in existence now, and upon all the worlds that are yet to come.

True education recognizes the ancient as well as the modern-day prophets and apostles in all dispensations as universal educators. True education recognizes that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior, stands above all as a great teacher and a great educator for all mankind, for all dispensations. True education recognizes that we are the children of God and that this world is a great school of education. The whole world is a school, and all God's children upon the earth are but students in it. This great world school has on its enrollment every human being that is alive today, every human being that has ever lived in the past, and every human being that is yet to come. In this great world school, God our Heavenly Father is our Teacher, for there is no other teacher that can compare with him.

True education is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a panacea for all sin and evil. The gospel of Jesus Christ will do away with all evil, all selfishness, all greed, and all lawlessness. It will do away with immorality, crime, and all other wickedness. Our Heavenly Father, our great Teacher, is endeavoring to teach us in this school of life, for his Spirit is striving with all men, and through his inspiration a great flood of knowledge and understanding is coming into the world.

If you are one who is ambitious and desires a well-balanced education, be sure and be firm and anchored in the spiritual things first, in the deep things of God. Spiritual knowledge can be secured only by obedience to his gospel through which we may secure and retain the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Just as there are academic and athletic scholarships, there is also a life scholarship to which you are all entitled. That life scholarship is the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. He is our tutor, our educator, and our teacher.

True education starts in the home. Our Father in Heaven has given parents the responsibility of teaching the gospel to their children. He has clearly admonished us that if we do not spiritually educate our children, the sin will be upon the parents. The search for spiritual truth or knowledge should begin in the home. The home either makes or scars the character of children. The influences of the home, whether good or evil, carve and shape the souls of the precious spirit children of God. Since home and family development are powerful forces in the development of a child, a child's destiny is largely determined by what parents do with him in the home. The early imprint of family life in the home is usually not easily erased. Parents may not be able to teach their children everything there is to know about the gospel, but it is up to them to lay the foundation and prepare them to be receptive to spiritual education throughout their lives. Parents should not

look to Church auxiliary programs for the spiritual knowledge of their children.

### **Our Primary Concern**

It appears in the scriptures that the Lord wants us to be primarily concerned with feeding our spiritual selves while here in mortality. It seems that he desires us to emphasize or concentrate on seeking spiritual knowledge.

Let us briefly analyze some of these scriptures. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

*Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul. [D&C 101:37]*

It seems from this scripture that the Lord wants us to be most interested in the life of the soul, or the life of our spirit body, which part is eternal. If we are really going to know and appreciate eternal life, or his way of life, in this life we ought to emphasize gaining spiritual knowledge, or feeding our eternal spirit selves. As we take care of the needs of our spirits, then naturally, almost automatically, the needs of our natural bodies will be met.

Again from modern revelations we read,

*Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. [D&C 93:29]*

We learn from this verse that intelligences, or our spiritual bodies, were not created or made and never can be. Our spirit bodies, or intelligences, have no beginning and no end.

Again reading from the Doctrine and Covenants, we find that the Lord said,

*All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. [D&C 121:29]*

Thus, it appears that we are entitled to celestial glory if we develop a valiant testimony of Jesus Christ in this life and endure to the end. All dominions, principalities, powers, and thrones will be ours if we can in this life place spiritual things first, if we can subjugate the body to the spirit, if we can cast away all evil, and if we can gain spiritual knowledge first. Then we will be entitled to all of these great powers. Spiritual power is prerequisite to creative powers. When a man receives all dominions, principalities, and powers, he is given all that God has, and thereby he is all-knowing, including all-knowing about secular things. He then becomes a god.

Again, the Lord said, "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). It appears from this particular scripture that our Heavenly Father glories in his spirit sons and daughters or intelligences. He does not glory in intelligence or knowledge per se. He does not glory in our gaining secular knowledge alone, but he glories in our developing and expanding our spirit selves, or our intelligences.

### **To Become a God**

The way to become a god is to expand our intelligences, to add glory to our spirit selves, to have our spiritual knowledge control our secular knowledge, to subjugate secular knowledge to our spiritual knowledge.

Again we read, "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" (D&C 131:6). It appears that the ignorance that the Lord talks about in this particular scripture means ignorance of him, his programs, and his teachings. It means ignorance of spiritual knowledge. It does not necessarily mean ignorance of secular knowledge. It is impossible for any one of us to be saved with only secular knowledge. A man can become a great physicist or a great scientist, but he will not be entitled to celestial glory if he lacks spiritual knowledge. On the other hand, a man can become a great physicist

or a great scientist and at the same time be well anchored in spiritual things. In this situation, he is entitled to celestial glory because he has placed spiritual knowledge over secular knowledge. He has placed God and the gospel of Jesus Christ first. Like the Lord, he has put all earthly glory behind him and lived a spiritual life.

The Lord Jesus Christ set a good example for us in this area. Certainly he was the master Teacher, the master Creator, the Master of all sciences, the Master of all secular things, but yet he always placed spiritual things first. As great as he is, he always subjugated the secular to the spiritual. He put all worldly power, fame, and glory behind him and chose spiritual life for which he came here. We must do the same.

From the Doctrine and Covenants, we read,

*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. [D&C 130:19]*

It appears from this scripture that we will be graded in the life hereafter by how much glory we have added to our spirit selves, or intelligences. We will be graded by how much we have expanded our spiritual minds in regard to spiritual things, or the things of God, how much we have fed our spirit bodies, or intelligences. Since our spirits are eternal, any eternal, spiritual truths we train them with will be to our advantage in the life hereafter. We can only add to our spirits, or intelligences, through our diligence and obedience to his commandments and laws. From these scriptures we learn that mere book learning and merely seeking secular knowledge are not what the Lord has in mind.

Why take a chance to fill your mind with secular knowledge which sometimes is of only temporal use? Secular knowledge has limitations unless it has a relationship to the spiritual

truth. Why learn and know all about geology, zoology, psychology, mathematics, history, government when you have very little chance to use it, not having qualified in this life to be a god with creative powers to create worlds? We must qualify ourselves to become gods first before we have the ability to create worlds, or to be all-knowing about worlds. What good is it to know about math, forestry, civil law, or philosophies of men if you don't know the Creator himself? What will it take and how long will it take for us to know and understand and realize that the Creator himself is a master of secular knowledge? He is the Master of forestry, math, civil laws, and all the sciences. What good is it to accumulate secular knowledge if you don't live his laws that will perfect you? What good is it to know about all of these secular things when we do not obey the commandments which will help us become gods so that we in turn can become masters of all sciences and all secular knowledge?

Secular knowledge can have a permanent or important value only if we become a god first. Then we will have the creative powers to create worlds and place upon them fishes in the sea, birds in the trees, and beasts in the forests. Secular knowledge alone, as important as it may be, can never save a soul, cannot open the gates of the celestial kingdom, cannot create a beautiful world or make a man a god. Secular knowledge can only be most useful and helpful to a man who places spiritual things first, a man who has found a way to eternal life, a man who is anchored in spiritual things. When he does this, and only then, will he be in a position to bring into place all knowledge to be his tool and servant.

A mission should come first over any worldly aspiration, including college work. Temple marriage should take top priority over degrees or secular training. A Church assignment or calling should be more important than sports or any pleasure or entertainment. Church assignments or responsibilities should

come first over a hobby or TV show, a movie or work. Church or spiritual activity should take priority over a secular activity. Home teaching should take precedence over a ballgame. Church attendance should have priority over a television show or a visiting of friends, relatives, or loved ones. The scriptures should take priority over secular books.

### **Anchored in the Spiritual**

My brothers and sisters, can you begin to see why the Lord emphasized, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Can you begin to see why he has emphasized spiritual education over secular education? Can you begin to see why he wants us to be anchored in the spiritual before the secular?

There will come a day somewhere in your life, somewhere along the way on the straight and narrow path, when you will come face to face with so-called learned men, intellectuals or philosophers. They will cast doubt on your faith and testimony. They will cast doubt on your spiritual education. If such a time comes in your life where you begin to have some doubts, when you are faced with a challenge or problem, try to approach your problem from the point of view of seeing how much you can build up your spiritual belief and not from the point of view of trying to see how much you can build up your spiritual belief and not from the point of view of trying to see how much you can tear down your gospel belief. In all your approaches to the problems of life, try to reach after them from the point of view of the gospel, from the point of view of spiritual knowledge.

The Savior said in the Sermon on the Mount,

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. [Matthew 7:15]*

Paul, as he made his farewell address to the people at Ephesus, said,

*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

*Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. [Acts 20:29–30]*

Remember, rarely do men die to vindicate secular knowledge, but it is different with the spiritual knowledge that you have and will have and should have. Men have gone to martyrs' deaths from the beginning until now to vindicate their spiritual knowledge. Do not slip away from spiritual knowledge. Do not allow secular knowledge to occupy most of your time throughout your life.

### **On Guard**

My brothers and sisters, if there ever was a time in our history when we must be on guard against these so-called learned men or philosophers, that time is today, that time is now. We must not be asleep; we have the truth. We have the spiritual knowledge; we must preserve it.

These ravening wolves are among us, sometimes from our own Church membership, and they, more than any others, are clothed in sheep's clothing. These ravening wolves will begin to make friends with you. They will cultivate your friendship. They will invite you to their homes. They will take you to their socials; they will take you to their classes of instruction. They will get you to lie and cheat a little. They will get you to break the Word of Wisdom and the law of chastity. They will tell you that your religion is too hard to live. Before you know it, you will find yourself slipping away from spiritual truths, spiritual knowledge, and activity in the Church. Before you know it, you have lost your faith and testimony.

Someone said we never lose eternal life by a blowout. It is always by a series of slow

leaks, a little disobedience here, a little disobedience there, a little disbelief here and there, a little sin here, a few harmless mistakes. Before we know it, we have lost eternal life. These ravening wolves and other so-called intellectuals, learned men and philosophers, have destroyed the morality and spirituality of millions of people. They have led multitudes into disbelief. Their ideas and attitudes that are unwholesome and unholy spread quickly. These supposedly learned men will cast doubts on your faith and testimony. They will cast doubts on spiritual things. They will cast doubts on your spiritual knowledge. These men will have you be anchored in secular knowledge first. They will lead you to the paths of doubt and unto destruction. They know not the truth, but they think they know it. They will try to persuade you that you should follow them.

My friends, beware of these faith killers and testimony killers. Some of them will be found on university and college campuses throughout the nation. Because of their supposedly superior knowledge and ability and because of the students' hunger and thirst to learn, it will seem natural for students to wholeheartedly believe these faith killers.

Jesus Christ said, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matthew 10:36). Teachers, whether on the elementary, secondary, or college level, are supposed to be among our greatest benefactors, yet sometimes these same instructors may destroy the morality and spirituality of many of our young people. Beware of these testimony killers; they will teach you philosophies that are contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. With their fine intellects and sometimes because of their charm and their strong personalities, they will make broad the straight and narrow path.

The Jaredite nation was destroyed because people listened too much to the so-called learned men, philosophers, and ravening wolves, which were among them. The Nephite

civilization was also destroyed because of the same reason. They listened more to these ravaging wolves, and they were destroyed by their secret combinations. This Jaredite and Nephite disease is also among us today, and it will destroy our nation if we do not repent and return to the God of this land, even Jesus Christ. This Jaredite-Nephite disease will destroy us if we do not place spiritual knowledge above secular knowledge.

We have seen civilization after civilization destroyed because their members have been wrong in their thinking. There are many in our own day who follow this pattern. I think in education there are some who talk about academic freedom, and they feel that they have a right to teach as they choose. Then they teach anything and everything that they choose in the name of academic freedom. More often than not, they teach their own philosophies, philosophies of men, in the name of academic freedom. I feel that freedom in education or in life is good, provided that we are in harmony with the mind, the will, and the word of the Lord; otherwise, I think we will be wrong.

### **Do Not Be Deceived**

The Lord said that our joy would be great if we bring but one soul unto him, but I say how great will be our regret if, through our bad influence, example, and teaching, we should lead one soul away from God.

Do not be deceived. Can you see why we should let spiritual knowledge take first place in our lives, why it should take precedence? Can you begin to see why we must pray unceasingly, why we must study the scriptures diligently, why we must perfect our lives as the Savior did? Can you begin to see why religion classes should have preferential attention over the regular secular college courses? Can you begin to see why the study of the scriptures, or seeking spiritual knowledge, should take precedence over secular knowledge and

learning? Can you begin to see why the scriptures should take priority over the man-written books? Can you begin to see why association with the Church should take priority over campus clubs? Can you begin to see why the paying of tithing should take priority over the paying of tuition and fees? Can you begin to see why the ordinances of the temple should take priority over any worldly activity?

My brothers and sisters, why become obsessed with the acquisition of secular knowledge at the expense of spiritual knowledge and performance? Why become obsessed with the philosophies of men at the cost of spiritual knowledge or performance? Why become intoxicated with your own intelligence and success and become too self-sufficient and proud to feel the need for spiritual knowledge? Can you begin to understand why the Savior said what he did when he said, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26). What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole earth, whether it be in a dominion of political position or power, or whether it be in a dominion of scientific worlds, whether it be in a dominion of some abstract knowledge, or any other walk of life, if by gaining that secular knowledge and dominion, he lose his own soul?

From these instructions and others, the Lord makes it clear to us that the secular things taught in the colleges and universities are important, but the Lord places first things first. He puts everything in its proper sequence. He desires all of us to learn of his teachings and the laws of the gospel pertaining to eternal life. Then he wants us to add the knowledge of the world—chemistry, geology, geography, history, government, economics, and so on.

Jesus Christ himself gave us the proper sequence when he said,

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you [Matthew 6:33]*



To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord said,

*This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law. [D&C 132:24]*

There will come a day in the future, my brothers and sisters, when the kingdoms of man will come crashing down, but the kingdom of God will stand firm and unshaking. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.