

“Find Gospel Ways to Help”

A guide to help BYU employees apply gospel methodology, concepts, and insights in their work

By Steve Hafen, Administration Vice President and CFO
and Jeff McClellan, Director of Brand & Creative

Sean Clemence says he is less worried than he used to be. The challenge of promoting TV shows from a broadcast studio in Provo, Utah, to a national audience in a crowded media landscape can be daunting. But Clemence says the divine inspiration he feels guiding his work has made him feel more at peace. “We’re not in it by ourselves,” he says. “The Lord is in the work.”

In his team at BYU Broadcasting, Clemence says they work hard to create an environment where they can receive the guidance of the Spirit. That means having prayers, spiritual thoughts, and gospel conversations in the workplace. It means avoiding pride, contention, and anything that would prevent inspiration. It also means intentionally seeking revelation to guide decisions—and involving student employees in that process. Advancement vice president Keith Vorkink, who oversees BYU Broadcasting, spoke in 2022 about the gospel methodology of group revelation and encouraged advancement employees to make room at the table for student employees as teams seek guidance in decisions.

At BYU Broadcasting, Clemence has taken that teaching to heart. “We have students in our meetings, and we rely on them to share ideas that are revelatory,” Clemence says. He has found that a willingness to reach for spiritual direction has made the team more receptive to heavenly guidance in their work—“and the work that we’re trying to do is so important,” he notes “We’re in the hearts-and-minds business.”

Gospel Methodology, Concepts, and Insights

Sean Clemence’s experience at BYU Broadcasting demonstrates a slightly different take on Brigham Young’s charge to Karl G. Maeser to teach everything—including the alphabet and the multiplication tables—with the Spirit of God. That founding ethic permeates everything at this university, whether in the classroom, at the shop, on the grounds, or in the studio.

Yet even after 150 years, each new generation of BYU employees learns this lesson afresh. At BYU’s centennial in 1975, President Spencer W. Kimball urged the BYU community “to find gospel ways to help mankind. Gospel methodology, concepts, and insights can help us to do what the world cannot do in its own frame of reference.”¹

Rising to this lofty vision is our challenge as we all seek, as President C. Shane Reese has urged, “to become the BYU of prophecy.”²

But what does it really mean to incorporate “gospel methodology, concepts, and insights” into our work? We often hear about how faculty members should seek to teach their subjects in the light of the gospel, but how does this injunction apply to staff and administrative employees? How can “gospel ways” shape the work that we do? And what is “gospel methodology” anyway?

This document is intended to provide helpful perspective, ideas, and examples—a framework for applying gospel methodology, concepts, and insights into our work at BYU.

Definitions and Framework

While we may not know with certainty what President Kimball intended when he spoke of “gospel methodology, concepts, and insights,” for this discussion, we assume that when he listed three items—methodology, concepts, and insights—he was speaking of three interrelated ideas that can each be important for our understanding:

- **Gospel Methodology:** A system of methods or procedures to accomplish God’s divine purpose.
- **Gospel Concepts:** Key principles, elements, or truths of the gospel.
- **Gospel Insights:** Inspired understanding or perspectives that come through gospel study, prayer, and worship.

An essential word in this series is *gospel*, which is the good news of Jesus Christ’s Atonement. That word comes first, emphasizing that the context of our Savior’s redemptive and enabling grace must inspire, inform, guide, and ground our understanding and application of methodologies, concepts, and insights at BYU. The other elements are ways to help us and our students to access the power of Jesus Christ’s Atonement in our work, our education, and our lives.

The framework below outlines a few key examples of gospel methodology, concepts, and insights that could be applied at BYU, along with some ideas for application. Although this framework is incomplete, it provides a starting point for reflection and discussion. At the end of this paper are several real-life examples of how BYU employees are successfully incorporating gospel methodology, concepts, and insights in their work.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ		
Methodology <i>purpose-driven procedures</i>	Concepts <i>essential principles</i>	Insights <i>inspired understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • Revelation • Repentance • Covenants • Temple worship • Family relationships • Ministering • Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity • Agency • Obedience • Sacrifice • Service • Unity • Humility and meekness • Civility and respect • Communication and listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing our primary identity as children of God, children of the covenant, and disciples of Jesus Christ • Thinking Celestial • Letting God prevail • Seeking group revelation in council discussions • Thinking of responsibilities as stewardships • Asking inspired questions • Extending clear invitations to act

Ideas for Application

incorporating gospel methodology, concepts, and insights at BYU

- When counseling together to seek group revelation, include students, new employees, and others with diverse viewpoints.
- Use formal and informal councils to address issues and improve performance.
- Pray at the beginning of your workday or when a solution is not immediately clear.
- Pray in one-on-one meetings as well as in meetings and events.
- Pray for students, colleagues, leaders, and others facing difficult challenges.
- Attend devotionals, alone or with your team.
- Build meaningful relationships with colleagues and students.
- Seek to serve each other and address personal needs, even outside of work.
- Worship in the temple frequently.
- Talk about times when you have felt the influence of the Spirit in your work.
- Discuss prophetic teachings and seek to apply them in work responsibilities.
- In work settings, share your testimony of Jesus Christ, His gospel, and the Church.

Finding Your Own Application

These ideas are just a beginning. As you seek to discover and apply your own ideas, the following principles may be helpful:

- **Study** the gospel and study your field of expertise. Seek to apply what you learn in one field to the other. Identify gospel methodology, concepts, and insights that resonate in your heart.
- **Ponder** gospel methodology, concepts, and insights in the context of your work; discuss your ideas with colleagues and students.
- **Pray daily** about your work. Ask God to deepen your understanding and help you apply gospel methodology, concepts, and insights. Seek inspiration from the Holy Ghost.

Becoming BYU

In 1875 Brigham Young Academy was founded with a destiny to become a Christ-centered university of eternal influence. Over the last 150 years, hundreds of thousands of students and employees have played a role in shaping this divine destiny and building a firm foundation of faith. Today, we are the grateful beneficiaries of their contributions.

As we embark on the second half of the second century at BYU, our charge is to build upon that foundation as we strive to better apply gospel methodology, concepts, and insights into our everyday work at BYU. In doing so, we will, as President Kimball promised, be able “to do what the world cannot do.” We will rise to a level of excellence that will enable BYU to reach its prophesied potential.

“We can and we must be excellent,” said President Reese in August 2023, “not in spite of our loyalty to the gospel of Jesus Christ but directly and precisely because of it. We will anchor our excellence in devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”³

Additional Examples

Below are additional examples of how BYU employees are incorporating gospel methodology, concepts, and insights in their work. We hope these examples inspire you in your own work.

The Love of God

Donna Piereder, Staff and Administrative Employment

In one of her readings of the Book of Mormon, Donna Piereder was drawn to one particular scripture that impressed her enough that she put it on her computer screen at work: “And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (4 Nephi 1:15).

“If each of us could keep the love of God in our hearts,” Piereder says, “I think that it would make us more effective leaders . . . [and] lead us to create healthy relationships.” In her office, striving to develop such love has guided her and others to get to know their student employees personally and to become involved in their lives. In one situation, a student employee had lost her father when she was a child and then her mother to COVID-19. After multiple tender conversations with the student about her life and experiences, the student invited Piereder and other coworkers to join her when she went to the temple to receive her endowment.

“That was one of my highlights of being a manager of students,” says Piereder. “That experience of being all together in the celestial room was just wonderful. And it was because we had developed this relationship with a student and we knew what was going on in her life.”

At All Times and in All Places

Josh Edwards, Carpentry Shop

When Josh Edwards tells people he works at BYU, they ask what he teaches. He is quick to respond, “I do teach, but I’m not a professor like you’re thinking. I teach kids how to work.”

Edwards takes his carpentry crew to various buildings all across campus as they carry out remodeling projects. And as they do, he teaches by example—construction skills, work ethic, and gospel living. He likes to ask students about their lives, their interests, their goals, their travels, their families, their missions. “Quite honestly, I get more out of it than they get out of me,” he says of the relationships they build and the conversations they have. “They learn a skill, and what I draw from them is their experience as a missionary.”

And it isn’t just his student employees with whom he engages. In one recent project Edwards was working in Special Collections at the Harold B. Lee Library, and as he worked, he talked to the Special Collections student employees. He taught them how to hang shelves on a wall and how to get seeds out of a pomegranate. “I think they were a little surprised,” he laughs. “They weren’t expecting that.” But Edwards sees it as his responsibility to teach and lift and serve wherever he is—like the baptismal covenant, at all times and in all places (see Mosiah 18:9). “They may only be with you for a couple of hours, but don’t be afraid to share something, whether it be temporal knowledge or spiritual knowledge,” he says.

Learning to Listen

Dixie Sevison, Women’s Services and Resources

“We never know who’s going to walk in the door,” says Dixie Sevison. Students will come in wanting to talk about a challenge they are facing, but “a lot of times the issue they came in for and said they needed to talk about isn’t the real issue, so I have to ask questions to help discover the issue.”

Knowing how to advise students facing weighty concerns is always a challenge, Sevison says. “I have gone to trainings, and I have degrees, but sometimes when someone is sitting there, I’m praying because my training didn’t prepare me for this. And sometimes the things I say come through inspiration, and I have to be prepared for that. In many ways, in our personal lives we need to be prepared to come to work and ready to receive inspiration.”

Sevison previously worked in a similar role at a public university, and there she would have to encourage students to reach for a higher power. But at BYU, she can testify of God’s love. “I’m able to say to these students, ‘You know, there are two people who have the answers to what you’re experiencing right now: you and your Heavenly Father. You just need to get quiet and listen to what He has to tell you.’”

A Bigger Picture

Jaren Wilkey, BYU Photo

“Our goal at BYU Photo is to help gather Israel,” says Jaren Wilkey. He and his team have made a deliberate shift in perspective from “I take pretty pictures” to “I create photos that help gather Israel.” That doesn’t mean they don’t strive for excellence: Wilkey is quick to point out that “making amazing photography helps gather Israel; making mediocre photography doesn’t.”

But what does photography have to do with gathering Israel? Wilkey says that great photography can bring attention to BYU and to the Church, raising awareness and interest in who we are and what we stand for. He also hopes that the photos his team produces communicate truth and light. He hopes that when someone sees an image created by BYU Photo, they feel something—the Spirit of God.

“I tell our students, ‘If your goal is to help other people through your photography, you are entitled to inspiration through the gift of the Holy Ghost in your work,’” Wilkey explains. This perspective changes a photographer’s mindset about what they are doing and why. And that makes all the difference. “We have a bigger picture and a deeper goal,” Wilkey says.

Our Primary Identity

Adam Baker, Office of Information Technology (OIT)

In the Security Operations Center, new employees (both student and professional) are quickly introduced to the field of cybersecurity—with a twist. “In the first few weeks,” says Adam Baker, “we ask people to come up with a scripture or a quote from a Church leader that gives the doctrinal foundation for the work they do.” While new employees are learning the intricacies of keeping BYU computers safe, they are also studying the word of God for insight and motivation in their work.

The practice was expanded to the rest of OIT, and Michelle Bennett spoke of its impact in her May 2024 devotional address: “Recently, employees at OIT were challenged to search the scriptures and find a scripture that related to or laid a foundation for their work. It has been amazing to hear how ancient scriptures and gospel principles apply in our everyday, modernized, technology-centric work. This focus to bring sacred meaning and divine guidance into even our most routine tasks has spiritually strengthened me and many others at OIT.”⁴

Baker says this exercise helps remind him that, as President Russell M. Nelson has said, his primary identity is as a child of God.⁵ “As I try to relate what I do to principles of the gospel,” Baker says, “it helps reinforce the idea that my gospel identity is my most important identity.”

I'm not a cybersecurity professional who happens to be a member of the Church. I'm a member of the Church who happens to be a cybersecurity professional."

Stewardship of Service

Coral Taylor, Y-Serve

As she supervises student leaders of service programs, Coral Taylor conducts regular meetings to learn what is going well and what challenges her students are facing. Borrowing a gospel term, they refer to their meetings as stewardship reviews, and in those meetings, "gospel conversation is commonplace," Taylor says. They begin and end with prayer, have spiritual thoughts, and invite the Spirit to guide the discussion, remembering that "the work we are doing is the Lord's work."

The gospel lens for these meetings is more than just an obligatory reference. It guides and infuses the discussion as student leaders consider how gospel principles can be incorporated into the programs. In one case, Taylor says, a student program leader wasn't opening up about the program. As they discussed a gospel concept, the student gradually became more open and more vulnerable and was then able to bring up challenges that needed addressing in the program.

This approach is part of being intentional about the work, Taylor says. "We are trying to become a Zion society. The idea is to help us become what the Lord wants us to become. How do we go about making that come to pass?"

Notes

1. Spencer W. Kimball "[The Second Century of Brigham Young University](#)," BYU devotional address, October 10, 1975.
2. C. Shane Reese, "[Becoming BYU: An Inaugural Response](#)," address delivered at his inauguration as BYU president, September 19, 2023.
3. C. Shane Reese, "[Quick to Observe](#)," BYU university conference address, August 28, 2023.
4. Michelle H. Bennett, "[Eternal Belonging and Becoming](#)," BYU devotional address, May 14, 2024.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, "Choices for Eternity," worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022.