Primary

(From *Priesthood & Auxiliary Leaders Guidebook*)

The Primary teaches children (ages 3 through 11) the gospel of Jesus Christ and helps them learn to live it. In Primary, children feel welcome, feel the Savior’s love, and feel the joy the gospel brings.

The Primary theme is “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” ([3 Nephi 22:13](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/3-ne/22.13?lang=eng)). The Primary assists priesthood leaders in accomplishing the mission of the Church by encouraging children to study the scriptures, pray, and follow the example of the Savior. The objectives of Primary are to:

* Teach children that they are children of God and that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love them.
* Help children learn to love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
* Help children prepare to be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and keep their baptismal covenants and promises.
* Help children grow in their understanding of the gospel plan and provide opportunities for them to live gospel principles.
* Help boys prepare to receive the priesthood and be worthy to use the priesthood to bless and serve others.
* Help girls prepare to be righteous young women, understand the blessings of the priesthood and the temple, and serve others.

Priesthood and Primary leaders and teachers help parents teach their children the gospel of Jesus Christ as they seek and are guided by the Spirit. Each child in Primary needs to be loved by caring teachers and leaders, especially children who come from homes that lack strong support for gospel living.

Teaching in the Savior’s Way

Here are just some of the many sources of power and support that He has made available to help you teach in His way.

*The power of the*[*Holy Ghost*](https://www.lds.org/topics/holy-ghost?lang=eng)*.* As you strive to live the gospel worthily, the Holy Ghost will reveal God’s will to you. He will give you thoughts, impressions, and creative ideas about how to help others learn. He will help you know which gospel principles to focus on. And He will touch the hearts of those you teach and inspire them to change. The Holy Ghost will make it possible for you to be “a teacher come from God,” because the Spirit is the real teacher, and when the Spirit is with you, you will teach with God’s power and help bring about the miracle of conversion ([John 3:2](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/nt/john/3.2?lang=eng); see also [2 Nephi 33:1](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/2-ne/33.1?lang=eng)).

*The promise of your calling and setting apart.* Your calling to teach comes from the Lord, not from man, and as President Thomas S. Monson has promised, “whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”[1](https://www.lds.org/manual/teaching-in-the-saviors-way/introduction-teaching-in-the-saviors-way?lang=eng) In addition, you have been set apart under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys; therefore, you have the right to the personal revelation you need to succeed. These blessings are yours as you seek them, remain faithful, and strive to be worthy.

*The power of prayer.* Your Heavenly Father is always available. You can speak to Him directly through prayer. “Ask the Father in my name,” the Savior said, “and you shall have the Holy Ghost” ([DHYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/18.18?lang=eng"&HYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/18.18?lang=eng"C 18:18](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/18.18?lang=eng); see also [DHYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/42.14?lang=eng"&HYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/42.14?lang=eng"C 42:14](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/42.14?lang=eng)).

Pray by Name for Those You Teach

“I have prayed for thee,” the Savior said to Peter, “that thy faith fail not” ([Luke 22:32](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/nt/luke/22.32?lang=eng)). Think about what happens inside you when you pray for someone—how does your prayer affect the way you feel about that person? Following the Savior’s example, pray by name for the people you teach who have the greatest needs. Pray to know and understand their specific needs, and ask Heavenly Father to “prepare their hearts” ([Alma 16:16](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/alma/16.16?lang=eng)) to learn the things that will help meet those needs.

***Question to ponder.*** As I pray for those I teach, what impressions do I receive?

***Scriptural example.*** What does Alma’s prayer on behalf of the Zoramites teach me about loving others? (see [Alma 31:24–36](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/alma/31.24-36?lang=eng)).

See Others as God Sees Them

Because God looks on a person’s heart, what He sees may be different from what we see on the outside (see [1 Samuel 16:7](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/ot/1-sam/16.7?lang=eng)). As you strive to see those you teach as God sees them, you will recognize their divine worth, and the Spirit will teach you what to do to help them achieve their potential.

***Questions to ponder.*** How has the love and confidence of a parent, teacher, or other mentor made a difference in my life? How could my love make a difference for someone I am trying to teach?

***Scriptural example.*** In [Luke 19:1–10](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/nt/luke/19.1-10?lang=eng), the Savior saw the publican Zaccheus differently from the way others saw him. What other examples from the scriptures show how God sees us?

Find Simple, Appropriate Ways to Express Your Love

Depending on your circumstances, expressing love to those you teach may mean giving them sincere compliments, taking an interest in their lives, listening carefully to them, involving them in the lesson, performing acts of service for them, or simply greeting them warmly when you see them. The way you treat people is just as important as what you teach them.

Sometimes our preoccupation with presenting a lesson can prevent us from expressing our love for those we teach. If this happens to you, consider how you could focus on what matters most. For example, before class you could ask a class member or a member of your auxiliary presidency to set up your classroom and prepare audiovisual equipment so that you will have more time to greet class members as they enter the room. You may also find that working with class members to prepare the room is an excellent way to interact with them before class begins.

***Questions to ponder.*** Do those I teach know that I love them? What evidence have I given them? What can I do to reach out in love to someone who seems unresponsive in class?

***Scriptural example.*** How did the Savior show love for those He taught? (see [John 13:3–16](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/nt/john/13.3-16?lang=eng); [3 Nephi 17](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/3-ne/17?lang=eng)). How can I follow His example as I teach?

Invite the Spirit into Your Teaching

The ultimate purpose of everything a gospel teacher does—every question, every scripture, every activity—is to invite the Spirit to build faith and to invite all to come unto Christ. Do all you can to invite the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Lord has promised, “The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith” ([DHYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/42.14?lang=eng"&HYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/42.14?lang=eng"C 42:14](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/42.14?lang=eng)). In addition, sacred music, the scriptures, words of latter-day prophets, expressions of love and testimony, and moments of quiet contemplation can all invite the presence of the Spirit.

Be a Humble Instrument of the Spirit

Sometimes teachers may be tempted to think that it is their knowledge or methods or personality that inspires those they teach. This attitude prevents them from inviting the Holy Ghost to teach class members and change their hearts. Your purpose as a teacher is not to make an impressive presentation but rather to help others receive the influence of the Holy Ghost, who is the true teacher.

Be Flexible

Often the best teaching moments are unexpected—for example, when someone shares an experience or asks a question that leads to a meaningful discussion. Allow time for such moments. Listen for promptings—both as you plan and as you teach—and be willing to change your plans if necessary to follow the promptings you receive. If you are spiritually prepared, the Lord can give you “in the very moment, what ye shall say” ([DHYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/100.6?lang=eng"&HYPERLINK "https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/100.6?lang=eng"C 100:6](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/100.6?lang=eng)). Remember that it is more important to follow the impressions of the Spirit than to cover a certain amount of material.

Nurture a Loving Atmosphere

Some factors that invite the Spirit are less tangible—the attitudes of the learners, the way they treat each other, and the way they feel about the gospel. Help your class members understand that each of them affects the spirit of the class. Encourage them to help you establish an open, loving, and respectful environment so that everyone feels safe sharing their experiences, questions, and testimonies.

Your example has a powerful influence on the attitudes of the learners, especially if you are teaching youth and children. Greet class members with a genuine smile and handshake as they arrive. With your words and your actions, show them that you love the gospel and that you care about their spiritual growth.

Support Parents

Parents are the most important gospel teachers for their children—they have both the main responsibility and the greatest power to influence their children (see [Deuteronomy 6:6–7](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/ot/deut/6.6-7?lang=eng)). As you teach children at church, prayerfully seek ways to support their parents in their essential role. For example, you could talk to parents about the needs and interests of their children, you could share with them what their children are learning in your class, and you could find out how you might support parents’ efforts as you teach.

Use a Variety of Teaching Methods

Not all children are alike, and each child is developing rapidly. Your efforts to teach children will be most effective as you use a variety of teaching methods, such as the following:

*Stories*

*Visual aids*

*Music*

Using All the Senses

Most children (and adults) learn best when multiple senses are involved. Find ways to help the children use their senses of sight, hearing, and touch as they learn. In some situations, you may even find ways to include their senses of smell and taste!

Give the Children Opportunities to Express Their Creativity

As sons and daughters of God, children are born to create. When you invite children to create something related to a gospel principle, you help them better understand the principle, and you give them a tangible reminder of what they have learned. They can also use their creation to share what they learned with others. As you teach children, allow them to build, draw, color, write, and create. These things are more than fun activities—they are essential to learning. Each issue of the *Liahona* or *Friend* magazine includes creative activities for children.

***Question to ponder.*** How could I include creative activities as I teach?

Encourage Children to Ask Questions

Children are naturally curious, and they have many questions. Strive to see their questions as opportunities, not as distractions or impediments to your lesson. Children’s questions are an indication that they are ready to learn. Such questions give you valuable insights into what the children are thinking, what concerns they have, and how they are responding to the things they are learning. Help them see that the answers to their questions can be found in the scriptures and the words of living prophets.

***Question to ponder.*** How can I show the children in my class that I value their questions and curiosity?

***Scriptural example.*** How was young Joseph Smith blessed by an invitation to ask questions? (see [Joseph Smith—History 1:10–20](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/pgp/js-h/1.10-20?lang=eng)).

Invite Children to Share What They Know

When children learn something new, they naturally want to share it with others. Encourage this desire by giving children opportunities to teach gospel principles to each other, their [family](http://www.mormon.org/values/family) members, and their friends. Also ask them to share with you their thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to the principles you are teaching. You will find that they have insights that are simple, pure, and powerful.

***Question to ponder.*** What gospel truths have I learned from a child?

***Scriptural example.*** What do I learn from the Savior’s example in [3 Nephi 26:14](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/3-ne/26.14?lang=eng)?

Address Disruptions with Love

Sometimes a child acts in ways that disrupt the learning of others in the class. When this happens, be patient, loving, and understanding about the challenges the child may be facing. He or she may just need more opportunities to participate in the lesson in positive ways—holding a picture, drawing something on the board, or reading a scripture.

If a child continues to be disruptive, it may be helpful to speak to him or her privately. In a spirit of love and patience, explain your expectations and your confidence that he or she can meet them. You might want to invite the child’s parents or a member of the Primary presidency to join you in this conversation.