

Mormon 1-3

I. How do we live Spiritually in Wicked World? How do We Stand in Holy Places?

“How many of you have ever wanted to develop a new talent? Have you ever taken piano or soccer lessons? Tonight I want to talk to you about developing a talent—not just any talent, but one very special talent I bet you have never even thought about. I would like to talk to you about developing your talent for spirituality.

“Did you know that spirituality is a talent? Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once said, “Above all talents . . . , chief among all endowments—stands the talent for spirituality” (*The Millennial Messiah* [1982], 234). Spirituality is learning how to listen to the Spirit and then letting it govern our lives” (Carol B. Thomas, “Developing Our Talent For Spirituality,” *General Conference*, April 2001, Internet Transcript, www.lds.org).

“President Wilford Woodruff once had a remarkable experience to which I would like to refer. He first publicly mentioned the incident at general conference in October of 1880. Sixteen years later he gave further details in a discourse delivered at the Weber Stake conference, and his remarks were published in *The Deseret Weekly*. In the 1880 conference President Woodruff told of dreams he had after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith in which he conversed with the Prophet many times. He then related another dream in which he talked with Brigham Young, and this is what he said about it:

“I saw Brother Brigham and Brother Heber ride in [a] carriage ahead of the carriage in which I rode when I was on my way to attend conference; and they were dressed in the most priestly robes. When we arrived at our destination I asked Prest. Young if he would preach to us. He said, ‘No, I have finished my testimony in the flesh I shall not talk to this people any more. But (said he) I have come to see you; I have come to watch over you, and to see what the people are doing. Then (said he) I want you to teach the people—and I want you to follow this counsel yourself—that they must labor and so live as to obtain the Holy Spirit, for without this you cannot build up the kingdom; without the spirit of God you are in danger of walking in the dark, and in danger of failing to accomplish your calling as apostles and as elders in the church and kingdom of God. And, said he, Brother Joseph taught me this principle.’ ” (*Journal of Discourses*, 21:318.)

President Woodruff then went on to say of that experience, as he spoke at the Weber Stake conference, essentially what I want to say today: “Every man and woman in this Church should labor to get that Spirit. We are surrounded by these evil spirits that are at war against God and against everything looking to the building up of the kingdom of God; and we need this Holy Spirit to enable us to overcome these influences.” (*Deseret Weekly*, 7 Nov. 1896, p. 643.)” (As cited in Howard W. Hunter, “Developing Spirituality,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 24).

“Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure to keep the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach you what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to

keep their hearts open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it.” (Joseph Smith to Brigham Young in Vision; *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 23 Feb. 1847, 2 vols., ed. Elden Jay Watson, Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1968, 1971, 2:529.)

“If I were a bishop or stake president today, what would I do? I think that I would try to put my major efforts on building the spirituality of the people. I would work as hard as I knew how to work in building their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in God our Eternal Father, in the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Restoration of this work and what it means and what it is all about. I would encourage my people to read the scriptures, to read the Book of Mormon, to read the New Testament. I would urge them with all the capacity I have to read quietly and thoughtfully and introspectively, if you please. I would urge them to read the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Regional Conference*, Eugene, Oregon, 14 Sept. 1996).

II. Mormon 1:

Does Age Matter? Thomas S. Monson, Jeremiah, Samuel, Joseph Smith

Tribute to Mormon: Sterling W. Sill

1-7 *Ammaron prepares Mormon to receive the Sacred Records*

1-4 A Joseph

4-7 Many people

“It should not be thought that Mormon was somber; rather, he was sober - meaning that he was thoughtful and serious minded, mature beyond his chronological age. Undoubtedly Mormon’s soberness was as much spiritual as emotional. The things of the Lord were important to him even at such an early age, as evidenced by the visitation of the Lord to him (see verse 15)” (Millett & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. IV, p. 209).

8-12 *Bloodshed among the warring Nephites and Lamanites*

13-19 *Spiritual darkness results from the Nephite Wickedness*

13-14 A wicked world

15 Despite the tragic surroundings of wickedness, Moroni sees the Savior

16-17 Frustration of not being able to preach

18-19 Satanic devices everywhere

“No matter how wicked and ferocious and depraved the Lamanites might be (and they were that!), no matter how much they outnumbered the Nephites, darkly closing in on all sides, no matter how insidiously they spied and intrigued and infiltrated and hatched their diabolical plots and breathed their bloody threats and pushed their formidable preparations for all-out war, they were not the Nephite problem” (Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, p.

376).

“The gift of the Holy Ghost adapts itself to all these organs or attributes. It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections.... It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation, and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens and gives tone to the nerves. I short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole thing. In the presence of such persons one feels to enjoy the light of their countenances, as the genial rays of a sunbeam. Their very atmosphere diffuses a thrill, a warm glow of pure gladness and sympathy to the heart and nerves of others who have kindred feelings, or sympathy of this spirit. No matter if the parties are strangers, entirely unknown to each other in person or character; no matter if they have never spoken to each other, each will be apt to remark in his own mind, and perhaps exclaim when referring to the interview, ‘O what an atmosphere encircles that stranger! How my heart thrilled with pure and holy feelings in his presence! What confidence and sympathy he inspired! His countenance and spirit gave me more assurance than a thousand written recommendations or introductory letters.’ Such is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and such are its operations when received through the lawful channel, the divine, eternal Priesthood” (Parley P. Pratt, *Key to Theology*, pp. 99-100).

“If our spirits are inclined to be stiff and refractory, and we desire continually the gratification of our own will to the extent that this feeling prevails in us, the Spirit of the Lord is held at a distance from us; or, in other words, the Father withholds his Spirit from us in proportion as we desire the gratification of our own will” (Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, 7:352).

“During my travels in the southern country last winter I had many interviews with President Young, and with Heber C. Kimball, and Geo. A. Smith, and Jedediah M. Grant, and many others who are dead. They attended our conference, they attended our meetings. And, on one occasion, I saw Brother Brigham and Brother Heber... when I was on my way to attend conference; and they were dressed in the most priestly robes... I asked Prest. Young if he would preach to us. He said, ‘No, I have finished my testimony in the flesh. I shall not talk to this people any more, But (said he) I have come to see you; I have come to watch over you, and to see what the people are doing. Then (said he) I want you to teach the people— and I want you to follow this counsel yourself— that they must labor and so live as to obtain the Holy Spirit, for without this you cannot build up the kingdom; without the spirit of God you are in danger of walking in the dark...” (Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses* 21:318).

Mini Lesson: Blame, Excuses, and Responsibility

Attitude: Dennis Deaton - Baseball,
Frank Leheay - Football

III. Mormon 2:

1-9 *Mormon Leads the Nephite Armies*

10-16 *Nephites experience the sorrowing of the damned*

“There are different kinds of sorrow. Thieves, robbers, murderers, adulterers, etc., are frequently sorrowful because they have been detected in the crimes they have committed. They are not sorrowful because they have sinned against God, or because they have injured others; but they are sorry because their crimes have been exposed, or that they have been prevented from a realization of the happiness which they anticipated. This is the sorrow of the world; and it is of the same nature as the sorrowing of the evil spirits in hell: they are sorry when they fail to accomplish their malicious designs against God and His people. This kind of sorrow worketh death.

Others have a species of sorrow arising through fear. They are convinced that they have, in numerous instances, violated the law of God, and they greatly fear the consequences in the great judgement day; but yet they feel no disposition to reform...

But the sorrow that is acceptable in the sight of God is that which leads to true repentance, or reformation of conduct; it is that sorrow which arises not only through fear of punishment, but through a proper sense of evil consequences of sin; it is that sorrow which arises from our knowledge of our own unworthiness, and from a contrast of our own degraded and fallen condition with the mercy, goodness, and holiness of God. We are sorry that we should ever have condescended to do evil. We are sorry that we should ever have rendered ourselves so unworthy before God; we are sorry at the weakness of our own fallen nature. *This kind of sorrow will lead us to obey every commandment of God; it will make us humble and childlike in our dispositions; it will impart unto us meekness and lowliness of mind; it will cause our hearts to be broken and our spirits to be contrite; it will cause us to watch, with great carefulness, every word, thought, and deed; it will call up our past dealings with mankind, and we will feel most anxious to make restitution to all whom we may have, in any way, injured.* ...These, and many other good things, are the results of Godly sorrow for sin. This is repentance not in word, but in deed: this is the sorrow with which the heavens are pleased” (Orson Pratt, *Orson Pratt: Writings of an Apostle*, pp. 30-31).

“One of the greatest principles of the of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the principle of repentance. However, if one has sinned so seriously and becomes habitually a sinner, and the spirit of repentance leaves, and he may or may not be able to repent” (Harold B. Lee, *Church News*, 3 March 1973, p. 4). XR Hebrews 10:26-29

“Without repentance there can be no forgiveness, and without forgiveness all the blessings of eternity hang in jeopardy. As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly nearer hopeless and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back up or he has lost the power to do so” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 117).

“Repentance, which is an assured passage to an eternal destination, is nevertheless not a

free ride.... Why is it necessary for us to suffer on the way to repentance for serious transgressions? We often think of the results of repentance as simply cleansing us from sin. But that is an incomplete view of the matter. A person who sins is like a tree that bends easily in the wind. On a windy and rainy day the tree bent so deeply against the ground that the leaves became soiled with mud, like sin. If we only focus on cleaning the leaves, the weakness in the tree that allowed it to bend and soil its leaves may remain. Merely cleaning the leaves does not strengthen the tree in the next high wind. The susceptibility to repetition continues until the tree has been strengthened” (Dallin H. Oaks, BYU Fireside, 5 August 1990).

9 Mormon defeats the Lamanites w/2,000 less men

10-12 Nephites begin to repent

13-14 Nephites blame God for mistakes and problems

17-29 *Mormon anguishes over the wickedness of his people*

18-19 Mormon remains faithful in a wicked world - not blaming

23-24 Mormon motivates them

25 Win despite the odds of being outnumbered by 20,000

“People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can’t find them, make them” (George Bernard Shaw).

“If Brother Brigham should take a wrong track and be shut out of the kingdom of heaven, no person will be to blame but Brother Brigham. I am the only being in heaven, earth, or hell, that can be blamed. This will equally apply to every Latter-day Saint. Salvation is an individual operation. I am the only person that can possibly save myself. When salvation is sent to me, I can reject or receive it” (Brigham Young, as cited by David O. McKay, *Conference Report*, April 1958, p. 5).

“All too often parents look to others to carry out responsibilities that rightfully belong to the parents. They sometimes even use worthwhile activities such as church or civic work as the excuse to absolve themselves of some of their responsibilities in the home. Too many parents blame others for the problems their children experience when in reality the basic responsibility is on their own doorstep” (Victor L. Brown, *CR*, October 1965, p. 73).

“...go and continue to call upon God until you make your calling and election sure for yourselves, by obtaining this more sure word of prophecy, and wait patiently for the promise until you obtain it” (Joseph Smith, *TPJS*, p. 299). XR *TPJS* p. 150

IV. Mormon 3:

1-16 *Mormon cries repentance, but to no avail*

1-3 Nephites did not realize where blessings came from

“Gratitude is twin sister to humility; pride is a foe to both. The man who has come into close communion with God cannot fail to be thankful; for he feels, he knows, that for all he has and all he is, he is indebted to the Supreme Giver; and one would think that there is no need of commandment in the matter of thanksgiving. Yet we find that because of man’s propensities toward forgetfulness and selfishness the Scriptures abound in admonitions to render thanks unto the Lord” (James E. Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks*, p. 483).

“Great men have always recognized the greatness of god and their dependance upon him, and they have with regularity rendered to him gratitude and thanksgiving” (Marion G. Romney, *Ensign*, November 1982, p. 50).

17-22 *Mormon’s words to go forth to the gentiles and the house of Israel*

V. **Traditions: Fiddler on the Roof**

Holland: Who We Are and What God Expects Us to Do

- **Except From, “That We May Always Have His Spirit To Be With Us,” David A. Bednar, General Conference, April 2006, Internet Transcript.**

Confirmation and the Baptism of the Spirit

Following our baptism, each of us had hands placed upon our heads by those with priesthood authority and was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us (see **D&C 49:14**). The statement "receive the Holy Ghost" in our confirmation was a directive to strive for the baptism of the Spirit.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost" (*History of the Church*, 5:499). We were baptized by immersion in water for the remission of sins. We must also be baptized by and immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, "and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost" (**2 Nephi 31:17**).

As we gain experience with the Holy Ghost, we learn that the intensity with which we feel the Spirit's influence is not always the same. Strong, dramatic spiritual impressions do not come to us frequently. Even as we strive to be faithful and obedient, there simply are times when the direction, assurance, and peace of the Spirit are not readily recognizable in our lives. In fact, the Book of Mormon describes faithful Lamanites who "were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not" (**3 Nephi 9:20**).

The influence of the Holy Ghost is described in the scriptures as "a still small voice" (**1 Kings 19:12**; see also **3 Nephi 11:3**) and a "voice of perfect mildness" (**Helaman 5:30**). Thus, the Spirit of the Lord usually communicates with us in ways that are quiet, delicate, and subtle.

Withdrawing Ourselves from the Spirit of the Lord

In our individual study and classroom instruction, we repeatedly emphasize the importance of recognizing the inspiration and promptings we receive from the Spirit of the Lord. And such an approach is correct and useful. We should seek diligently to recognize and respond to promptings as they come to us. However, an important aspect of baptism by the Spirit may frequently be overlooked in our spiritual development.

We should also endeavor to discern when we "withdraw [ourselves] from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in [us] to guide [us] in wisdom's paths that [we] may be blessed, prospered, and preserved" (**Mosiah 2:36**). Precisely because the promised blessing is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*, we should attend to and learn from the choices and influences that separate us from the Holy Spirit.

The standard is clear. If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing. If that which is intended to entertain, for example, alienates us from the Holy Spirit, then certainly that type of entertainment is not for us. Because the Spirit cannot abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then clearly such things are not for us. Because we estrange the Spirit of the Lord when we engage in activities we know we should shun, then such things definitely are not for us.

I recognize we are fallen men and women living in a mortal world and that we might not have the presence of the Holy Ghost with us every second of every minute of every hour of every day. However, the Holy Ghost can tarry with us much, if not most, of the time—and certainly the Spirit can be with us more than it is not with us. As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, we should strive to recognize impressions when they come and the influences or events that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

Taking "the Holy Spirit for [our] guide" (**D&C 45:57**) is possible and is essential for our spiritual growth and survival in an increasingly wicked world. Sometimes as Latter-day Saints we talk and act as though recognizing the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives is the rare or exceptional event. We should remember, however, that the covenant promise is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. This supernal blessing applies to every single member of the Church who has been baptized, confirmed, and instructed to "receive the Holy Ghost."

The Liahona as a Type and Shadow for Our Day

In our day the Book of Mormon is the primary source to which we should turn for help in learning how to invite the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. The description in the Book of Mormon of the Liahona, the director or compass used by Lehi and his family in their journey in the wilderness, specifically was included in the record as a type and a shadow for our day and as an essential lesson about what we should do to enjoy the blessings of the Holy Ghost.

As we strive to align our attitudes and actions with righteousness, then the Holy Ghost becomes for us today what the Liahona was for Lehi and his family in their day. The very factors that caused the Liahona to work for Lehi will likewise invite the Holy Ghost into our lives. And the very factors that caused the Liahona not to work anciently will likewise cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost today.

The Liahona: Purposes and Principles\

As we study and ponder the purposes of the Liahona and the principles by which it operated, I testify that we will receive inspiration suited to our individual and family circumstances and needs. We can and will be blessed with ongoing direction from the Holy Ghost.

The Liahona was prepared by the Lord and given to Lehi and his family after they left Jerusalem and were traveling in the wilderness (see **Alma 37:38; D&C 17:1**). This compass or director pointed the way that Lehi and his caravan should go (see **1 Nephi 16:10**), even "a straight course to the promised land" (**Alma 37:44**). The pointers in the Liahona operated "according to the faith and diligence and heed" (**1 Nephi 16:28**) of the travelers and failed to [work when family members were contentious, rude, slothful, or forgetful](#) (see **1 Nephi 18:12, 21; Alma 37:41, 43**).

The compass also provided a means whereby Lehi and his family could obtain greater "understanding concerning the ways of the Lord" (**1 Nephi 16:29**). Thus, the primary purposes of the Liahona were to provide both direction and instruction during a long and demanding journey. The director was a physical instrument that served as an outward indicator of their inner spiritual standing before God. It worked according to the principles of faith and diligence.

Just as Lehi was blessed in ancient times, each of us in this day has been given a spiritual compass that can direct and instruct us during our mortal journey. The Holy Ghost was conferred upon you and me as we came out of the world and into the Savior's Church through baptism and confirmation. By the authority of the holy priesthood we were confirmed as members of the Church and admonished to seek for the constant companionship of "the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (**John 14:17**).

As we each press forward along the pathway of life, we receive direction from the Holy Ghost just as Lehi was directed through the Liahona. "For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do" (**2 Nephi 32:5**).

The Holy Ghost operates in our lives precisely as the Liahona did for Lehi and his family, according to our faith and diligence and heed.

"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. . . .

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth" (**D&C 121:45–46**).

And the Holy Ghost provides for us today the means whereby we can receive, "by small and simple things" (**Alma 37:6**), increased understanding about the ways of the Lord: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all [things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you](#)" (**John 14:26**).

The Spirit of the Lord can be our guide and will bless us with direction, instruction, and spiritual protection during our mortal journey. We invite the Holy Ghost into our lives through meaningful personal and family prayer, feasting upon the words of Christ, diligent and exacting obedience, faithfulness and honoring of covenants, and through virtue, humility, and service. And we steadfastly should avoid things that are immodest, coarse, crude, sinful, or evil that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

We also invite the ongoing companionship of the Holy Ghost as we worthily partake of the sacrament each Sabbath day: "And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from

the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (**D&C 59:9**).

Through the ordinance of the sacrament we renew our baptismal covenant and can receive and retain a remission of our sins (see **Mosiah 4:12, 26**). In addition, we are reminded on a weekly basis of the promise *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. As we then strive to keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the world, we become worthy vessels in whom the Spirit of the Lord can always dwell.

In February of 1847 the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to Brigham Young in a dream or vision. President Young asked the Prophet if he had a message for the Brethren. The Prophet Joseph replied: "Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure *to keep* the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom" (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 41; emphasis added). Of all the truths the Prophet Joseph might have taught Brigham Young on that sacred occasion, he emphasized the importance of obtaining and keeping the Spirit of the Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify of the living reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. May each of us so live *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us* and thereby qualify for the blessings of direction, instruction, and protection that are essential in these latter days. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. (David A. Bednar, "That We May Always Have His Spirit To Be With Us," *General Conference*, April 2006, Internet Transcript).